

**MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE  
WASHINGTON STATE TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION  
February 15 & 16, 2011**

The regular meeting of the Washington State Transportation Commission was called to order at 9:00 a.m., on Tuesday, February 15 & 16, 2011, in Room 1D2 of the Transportation Building in Olympia, Washington.

**MINUTES APPROVAL/ADOPTION**

*It was moved by Commissioner Ford and seconded by Commissioner O'Neal to adopt the verbatim minutes of the January 5, 2011, SR 520 Toll Rates Final Public Hearing and January 18 & 19, 2011 Regular Commission meeting minutes as amended.*

**FERRY RIDER OPINION SURVEY FINAL REPORT**

Bill Svendsen, Market Decisions Corporation, presented the Final Report of the Ferry Rider Opinion Survey 2010-2011. Nearly 8500 people participated in the survey. Half the rides taken are for commute purposes system wide, but only a third of the users are commuters. The purposes for trips across Puget Sound are similar between Eastside and Westside residents; however residents on the eastside of Puget Sound are more likely to travel westbound for recreation.

Just under half of freight users say that wait time is an issue; half say that wait time is not an issue. There is an opportunity to increase the value to freight haulers with a reservation system. Data from freight users indicates the opportunity to shift about 1/3 of freight trips to off-peak hours.

On capital funding, respondents prefer a statewide gas tax over other alternatives. Nearly half of ferry riders support a small fare increase to free up state money for capital needs.

Peak vehicle drivers' behavior is quite inelastic until fares increase by 25 percent. Across the system, 42 percent of peak hour trips are discretionary. By increasing only peak fares, the modeling shows 8 percent will avoid the peak times. Another simulation indicates that ferry riders value time over money – if their wait time increases by an additional boat, 11 percent will shift to off-peak or walk-on travel.

Support for a ferry reservation system is split down the middle.

The Commission then discussed the Draft Questionnaire on Fare Strategies.

[http://wstc.wa.gov/Meetings/AgendasMinutes/agendas/2011/February15-16/documents/021511\\_BP2\\_FerrySurveySummary.pdf](http://wstc.wa.gov/Meetings/AgendasMinutes/agendas/2011/February15-16/documents/021511_BP2_FerrySurveySummary.pdf)

**Action/Follow-up: Revisions to the Fare Strategies Questionnaire.**

**WSDOT 2010 CONGESTION REPORT**

Daniela Bremmer, Director, Strategic Assessment Office, WSDOT, briefed the Commission on the 2010 Congestion Report, which compared 2007 and 2009 data on travel times and delay. Statewide,

VMT, congestion and delay all declined, even while the price of gasoline declined, and annual hours of per capita delay on state highways declined by 22 percent.

WSDOT hopes to add Olympia-Tacoma commute times to the August 2011 Report.

[http://wstc.wa.gov/Meetings/AgendasMinutes/agendas/2011/February15-16/documents/021511\\_BP3\\_WSDOT2010CongestionReport.pdf](http://wstc.wa.gov/Meetings/AgendasMinutes/agendas/2011/February15-16/documents/021511_BP3_WSDOT2010CongestionReport.pdf)

**Action/Follow-up: None.**

### **EXEMPLARY ECOSYSTEM INITIATIVE AWARD – PRESENTATION TO WSDOT**

Dan Mathis, FHWA, presented a 2010 award for the Exemplary Ecosystem Initiative to WSDOT and the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) for the fish passage program. The award was presented to Megan White, Paul Wagner, John Peterson, Mike Barber from WSDOT and Dave Price from WDFW.

[http://wstc.wa.gov/Meetings/AgendasMinutes/agendas/2011/February15-16/documents/021511\\_BP4\\_ExemplaryEcosystemInitiativeAward.pdf](http://wstc.wa.gov/Meetings/AgendasMinutes/agendas/2011/February15-16/documents/021511_BP4_ExemplaryEcosystemInitiativeAward.pdf)

**Action/Follow-up: None.**

### **NORTHWEST IRONWORKERS AND FABRICATORS – BRIDGING WASHINGTON STATE**

Ron Piksa, President and Rick Jensen, Government Relations, Iron Workers District Council of the Pacific Northwest asked the Commission to support local workers and American steel in the construction of the Columbia River Crossing. They are concerned that the state will avoid using federal funds and, through a public-private partnership, off-shore some of the work, as occurred on the Tacoma Narrows Bridge project.

[http://wstc.wa.gov/Meetings/AgendasMinutes/agendas/2011/February15-16/documents/021511\\_BP5\\_NWIronWorkers.pdf](http://wstc.wa.gov/Meetings/AgendasMinutes/agendas/2011/February15-16/documents/021511_BP5_NWIronWorkers.pdf)

[http://wstc.wa.gov/Meetings/AgendasMinutes/agendas/2011/February15-16/documents/021511\\_BP5\\_WSDOTCRC.pdf](http://wstc.wa.gov/Meetings/AgendasMinutes/agendas/2011/February15-16/documents/021511_BP5_WSDOTCRC.pdf)

**Action/Follow-up: None.**

### **CREATING A SUSTAINABLE WORKFORCE AT WSDOT**

David Dye, Deputy Secretary and Katy Taylor, Director, Human Resources, WSDOT, described the WSDOT Sustainable Workforce Review. Current efficiency efforts at the agency include strategic planning, \$65 million in overhead reductions during the 2009–11 and 2011–13 biennia, and on-going programs including partnering, materials R & D, and value engineering.

The current WSDOT staffing level for highway construction is not sustainable over time even with new revenue. The overall program size and composition in the near future drives the need for a smaller workforce. WSDOT plans to reduce engineering and technical staff by an average 200 employees per year for four years. The process will be seniority driven. WSDOT will attempt to

avoid involuntary reductions in force.

Assumptions as WSDOT enters this downsizing:

- Different business and delivery model
- Core workforce supports preservations and safety programs
- Impacts to multiple budget programs
- More work done by private sector
- WSDOT maintain federal certifications and retains eligibility for federal funds
- Planning for three future scenarios
  - New revenue
  - No new revenue
  - Less revenue

WSDOT wants to remain an employer of choice. It will retain the current matrix structure of HQ and regions. The new method of program delivery will establish more flexible engineering and technical staff positions that shift from “doing” to “overseeing” work during times of larger programs and greater use of consultants and contracting.

Commissioners expressed concern that the challenge facing WSDOT is facing other industries and sectors across the state. It may just be the tip of the iceberg.

[http://wstc.wa.gov/Meetings/AgendasMinutes/agendas/2011/February15-16/documents/021511\\_BP6\\_WSDOTSustainableWorkforce.pdf](http://wstc.wa.gov/Meetings/AgendasMinutes/agendas/2011/February15-16/documents/021511_BP6_WSDOTSustainableWorkforce.pdf)

**Action/Follow-up: None.**

### **SECRETARY’S REPORT**

Paula Hammond, Secretary, WSDOT, noted that 81 percent of the Nickel and TPA projects are completed. The major remaining projects all are in Central Puget Sound. Workforce reduction in Eastern Washington is beginning now.

Any delay in SR 520 tolling will amount to a revenue loss of \$1 million a week. Also, the ferry reform efforts at the Legislature are significant. Labor and fuel are 80 percent of system costs.

Highlights of projects and milestones:

- Seattle City Council voted to approve working agreements on SR 99 Tunnel
- Coming up on 10-year anniversary of Nisqually earthquake
- Monday the first AWV ramp will be coming down
- Groundbreaking last week in Aberdeen for SR 520 pontoon construction
- Today WSDOT opened Good-to-Go Service Center at University Village
- Governors’ Expert Review Panel recommended alternative bridge designs for Columbia River Crossing
- Congressman Mica, Chair of House Transportation Committee, is holding a field hearing in Vancouver on March 21 on a Transportation Policy and Funding Proposal
- Senator Boxer also is developing a Transportation Policy and Funding Proposal

The Secretary stressed that we all need each other to keep a statewide transportation system together.

**Action/Follow-up: None.**

## **PUBLIC COMMENT**

There was no one present for public input.

## **TOLLING WORK SESSION**

Craig Stone, Director, Toll Division, WSDOT, provided Tolling Updates on toll facilities underway and under discussion. He also briefed the Commission on proposed changes in the toll adjudication process. The Moving Washington strategy plans to evolve the Puget Sound HOV lanes into tolled express lanes. His overview covered the I-405 Express Toll Lanes proposal and the I-5 Express Lanes pre-study, which is examining I-5 from DuPont to north of Everett. A final report on I-5 tolling will be submitted to the JTC by June 30, 2011.

He also discussed the AWW Replacement Advisory Committee, which WSDOT and the City of Seattle agreed to establish, partly in response to toll scenarios indicating high levels of diversion to I-5 and city streets. The Advisory Committee on Tolling and Traffic Management will begin its work in March 2011 and submit initial recommendations by June 2012. The project timeline anticipates that SR 99 toll rates will be set in 2015.

The Expert Review Panel that analyzed the I-405/SR 167 Corridor express toll lanes options recommended moving forward with additional planning and analysis. WSDOT has also considered a full tolling option for I-405.

Finally, Mr. Stone discussed a WSDOT Study that surveyed and considered the possibility of evolving to a cashless toll system on TNB. WSDOT next plans to evaluate the results of 12 months of photo tolling.

[http://wstc.wa.gov/Meetings/AgendasMinutes/agendas/2011/February15-16/documents/021611\\_BP9\\_TollingUpdateCommission.pdf](http://wstc.wa.gov/Meetings/AgendasMinutes/agendas/2011/February15-16/documents/021611_BP9_TollingUpdateCommission.pdf)

**Action/Follow-up: Continue to monitor current tolling facilities.**

## **I-405 ALTERNATIVE TOLL PROPOSAL**

Former Senator Jim Horn proposed an Alternative Plan for Expanding I-405 Capacity. He suggested that HOT Lanes only work when general purpose lanes are broken. He pointed out that the proposed HOT Lanes on I-405 requires four policy changes:

- Changing HOV definition from 2+ to 3+
- Lowers LOS from D to F
- Uses revenue bonds instead of WA State Bonds
- Violates the I-405/SR 167 ROD from 2002

He also stated that the proposed average express toll (\$7.95) is too high to attract HOT ridership. He suggested tolling all lanes \$1.00 will generate \$2.6 billion over 25 years.

Commissioners noted that HOV lanes on I-405 are currently above capacity and asked about diversion from an all-toll route. Commissioners also questioned where the toll estimates came from.

Mr. Stone responded that modeling indicates the demand for road capacity is so high that it can command a \$7.95 total for the entire corridor length.

[http://wstc.wa.gov/Meetings/AgendasMinutes/agendas/2011/February15-16/documents/021611\\_BP10\\_I405AlternativeTollProposal.pdf](http://wstc.wa.gov/Meetings/AgendasMinutes/agendas/2011/February15-16/documents/021611_BP10_I405AlternativeTollProposal.pdf)

**Action/Follow-up: None.**

### **SR 99 TUNNEL PROJECT UPDATE**

Ron Paananen, SR 99 Project Administrator, WSDOT explained that the \$3.1 billion Alaskan Way Viaduct Replacement Program is underway with demolition of the first portion of the Viaduct beginning this month and construction between Holgate and King Street continuing. The Seattle City Council has approved working agreements with WSDOT; the agreement includes a Tolling Advisory Committee. In 2012, WSDOT will ask the Legislature for tolling authorization and bonding authority.

[http://wstc.wa.gov/Meetings/AgendasMinutes/agendas/2011/February15-16/documents/021611\\_BP11\\_AWV.pdf](http://wstc.wa.gov/Meetings/AgendasMinutes/agendas/2011/February15-16/documents/021611_BP11_AWV.pdf)

**Action/Follow-up: None.**

### **SR 99 REPLACEMENT PROJECT – SURFACE STREET IMPACTS**

Tim Payne of Nelson/Nygaard reprised a presentation on Surface Street Impacts from SR 99 Replacement Project that he made to the Seattle City Council. Issues include:

- Changing patterns of surface street traffic
- Traffic diversion due to tolling
- Secure and reliable transit routing
- Pedestrian/bicycle conflicts with vehicles
- Deterioration of system performance indicators – VMT, GHG emissions

The toolkit to address these issues includes tolling approaches:

- Integrated regional congestion pricing
- Segment tolling on SR 99
- Buy down tolls

[http://wstc.wa.gov/Meetings/AgendasMinutes/agendas/2011/February15-16/documents/021611\\_BP12\\_SR99ReplaceProjectImpacts.pdf](http://wstc.wa.gov/Meetings/AgendasMinutes/agendas/2011/February15-16/documents/021611_BP12_SR99ReplaceProjectImpacts.pdf)

**Action/Follow-up: None.**

### **LEGISLATIVE UPDATE**

Paul Parker, Senior Policy Analyst, WSTC, provided a status report on legislation impacting or of interest to the Commission. The legislative report noted that House and Senate companion bills were introduced regarding the construction issues for the Columbia River Crossing that were discussed the previous day.

**Action/Follow-up: Future legislative updates.**

# TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

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Secretary of Transportation

ATTEST:

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REEMA GRIFFITH, Executive Director

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DATE OF APPROVAL