

WASHINGTON STATE TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

Meeting Summary

Cheney, Washington

June 21, 2011

The local meeting of the Washington State Transportation Commission was called to order at 9:00 a.m., on Tuesday, June 21, 2011, at Cheney City Hall, Council Chambers, 609 Second Street, Cheney, Washington.

CHAIR WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Chair Parker opened the meeting with Commissioner and staff introductions.

MINUTES APPROVAL/ADOPTION

It was moved by Commissioner Ford and seconded by Commissioner Moser to approve minutes for the April 25, 2011 Conference Call and the meeting summary/minutes of the May 17 & 18, 2011 Commission meeting. The motion passed unanimously; Commissioner Haley abstained from voting on the April 25 Conference call summary.

COMMISSION BUSINESS

It was moved by Commissioner O'Neal and seconded by Commissioner Moser to nominate Commissioner Ford as Chair and Commissioner Parker as Vice-Chair for the year beginning July 1, 2011. The motion passed unanimously.

It was moved by Commissioner Ford and seconded by Commissioner Hill that the Commission send a letter to Congress and the Administration expressing its opposition to the proposal to reduce the number of Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs). He asked Commissioners to send any revisions to the staff draft by the end of the week so it could be sent to Congress before it begins action on reauthorizing transportation policy and funding. The motion passed unanimously.

TRANSPORTATION 101-A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF FUNDING AND PLANNING IN WASHINGTON STATE TRANSPORTATION

Paul Parker, Senior Policy Analyst, WSTC, provided an overview of transportation funding.

[Transportation 101](#)

CITY TRANSPORTATION ISSUES, CHALLENGES AND SUCCESSES

City of Cheney

Mayor Tom Trulove welcomed the Commission to Cheney and said that "We are all about partnerships in improving our community." Partners include EWU, the school district and private businesses. Cheney citizens pay a 4% utility (gas and electric) tax for transportation street

preservation. This tax captures the infrastructure use by students who live in Cheney for nine months a year. It generates about \$380,000 a year.

City Administrator Arlene Fisher provided an overview of Cheney's infrastructure projects. She also emphasized the importance of planning for the future with the updated 2011 Comprehensive Plan. Over \$141 million has been invested in the community in the last 3-1/2 years, including EWU expansion and renovation projects. The City has had 20% population growth since 2000; EWU enrollment has grown by 34%. Cheney has become a regional center for career and workforce training.

Cheney has 13.6 miles of arterials, 24.2 miles of asphalt residential streets and 3.5 miles of gravel residential streets. The average arterial street rating is 95. From 1999 to 2010, Cheney completed improvements on 100% of its arterial streets improvements. The average residential street rating is 85.

The Coalition for SR 904 has regional support and partners, including EWU, ADM Mills, and Spokane Transit Authority. The multi-modal corridor carries 13,000 vehicles a day and needs widening for safety and economic development. Spokane Transit carries 17% of the EWU traffic. The cost to upgrade to five lanes is \$25 to \$30 million.

[City of Cheney](#)

City of Spokane

Mayor Mary Verner talked about the importance of reconstructing the city road system. Spokane has been spending a \$117 million 2004 street bond on reconstruction; it has been trying innovative approaches with some projects, such as using recycled crushed glass in the aggregate. Spokane has a "Surviving Construction" program to work with small businesses impacted by road improvements. Strong citizen support and approval is leading the City to put together a Phase II bond proposal for the ballot. Spokane chooses to seek bond approval, despite its challenges, because there is a "user pays" philosophy behind the TBD license fee and a there is a lot of competition for sales tax and levies from other governmental entities.

The Phase II BOND will include a city-wide map to show where additional rebuilds will happen and the city comprehensive plan update will tie together transportation investment and economic development. The Market Street redevelopment, which involved the community in the street redesign, is an example of bringing together road, water and sewer infrastructure improvements to foster economic growth.

Unfortunately the City cannot use bond proceeds to maintain streets that have been improved. So, the Spokane City Council has established a Transportation Benefit District, including a \$20 license fee that takes effect in October. It is projected to generate \$2.6 million a year, dedicated to implementing the 6-year street plan. A Citizens Committee will help determine how the money is spent. The City dedicates money from red light camera enforcement to traffic calming and safety improvements. Also, Spokane continues to advocate for a street utility fee.

Bicycle facilities are very important in Spokane; the City is finishing a bicycle plan and working on a pedestrian plan. Spokane has had a series of workshops on Complete Streets; however, it can be challenging to talk with people about bike and pedestrian improvements when streets are in bad shape.

Spokane has built 11.4 miles of new bike lanes; a total of 23 miles of bike lanes are in place. The City also has built rain gardens to collect and manage stormwater.

Completing the North-South Corridor is very important to get freight traffic off the streets.

Spokane partners with the County, WSDOT and others. The city and county have adopted uniform street standards.

City of Airway Heights

Mayor Patrick Rushing explained that people who live in the Airway Heights and West Plains area need to drive to work; the jobs are in Spokane and other places. City Manager Albert Tripp elaborated on the need for improvements to US 2, which today carries about 32,000 trips a day. The West Plains Study also identified the need for intersection improvements.

Commissioner Ford noted that the commercial growth on SR 2 may be similar to the problems in Monroe. Mr. Tripp emphasized the City's desire to keep the traffic moving; a proposed couplet will help to address mobility and safety. Commissioner O'Neal expressed the view that people are important, too; not just automobiles. Mr. Tripp added that grass median strips and trees will help with traffic calming.

City revenue from property tax and REET has declined and puts transportation needs in greater competition with other needs.

REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION ISSUES, CHALLENGES AND SUCESSSES

Spokane County

Commissioner French noted that Spokane County has 2500 linear miles of roads and the county bridge network is deteriorating. There is a perception among Spokane residents that the state is not committed to local infrastructure improvements; many big projects have been started but not completed, such as:

- North Spokane Corridor, first discussed in 1949
- Bigelow Gulch widening
- SR 195 improvements
- Bridging the Gap

Idaho, by contrast, has work underway to make US 95 a superior North-South Corridor to US 395 and SR 2. Spokane County is in constant competition with Kootenai County for jobs.

Spokane and Kootenai County have begun talking about how the two counties can work together to improve transportation regardless of state lines. Transit service, including Bus Rapid Transit, is one topic of discussion. The Inland Pacific Hub, another joint project, looks at how to use transportation to bring jobs to the area.

In addition to the North Spokane Corridor as a freight improvement, a study has been done for a Northwest connector to connect SR 291/North Spokane with Airway Heights/I-90.

Commissioner French thinks that people locally are willing to spend more on infrastructure if the money stays local to meet the local needs. He emphasizes the need to promise what will be delivered and deliver what you promise. A proposed Kootenai County \$25 license fee failed three

times, most recently by 75-25. He wants to see more flexibility in funding models. He would support extending street utility authority to the unincorporated UGA.

Spokane Regional Transportation Council

Mark Rohwer, Interim Transportation Manager for SRTC, briefed the Commission on the recently completed West Plains-Spokane International Airport Study. It makes recommendations for vehicle and non-motorized improvements, including sidewalks.

Staci Lehman briefed the Commission on the Transportation Vision Project, which has a 30-50 year regional perspective. It started in March 2010 with a planning board game at a workshop and on-line, followed up with a phone survey. The phone survey and board game results varied substantially.

Vision Project Recommendations are:

- Further coordinate transportation and land use planning
- Focus investment to generate economic growth
- Define and develop an integrated transportation network
- Provide sustainable transportation choices
- Build a livable region
- Support the regional environment
- Ensure fiscal responsibility, accountability and sustainability
- Work together as a unified voice to make it happen

The Vision was adopted in June 2011 and will be incorporated into the SRTC Metropolitan Transportation Plan.

Eve Nelson, Senior Transportation Planner at SRTC, talked about four major plans to improve bike and pedestrian access since 2008: a Regional Bike Plan, Smart Routes, the Pedestrian Plan and a Bike Map. Mode share changes from 2006 to 2010 demonstrate the success of this work. Spokane is now at the national average for levels for non-motorized transportation use which is 11 percent. Nine percent of Spokane County trips for walking and two percent for biking.

Contributing factors to the mode share change are:

- Identify staff champions and form alliances
- Organize top local advocates
- Develop key partnerships, e.g., with Spokane Health District

[Spokane Regional Transportation Council](#)

WASHINGTON STATE DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION (WSDOT) REGIONAL PROJECTS AND PERSPECTIVES

Keith Metcalf, Eastern Regional Administrator, WSDOT briefed the Commission on the North Spokane Corridor. So far, over \$600 million has been allocated to the Corridor. The estimated total cost is \$1.93 billion (in 2010 dollars).

SR 904, connecting Cheney to I-90 and Spokane, has average daily traffic of 16,000 vehicles a day. The 2002 Route Development Plan recommends a 5-lane facility from Cheney to I-90 at an estimated cost of \$20 to \$30 million.

Currently WSDOT Eastern Region has a 500 mile backlog of pavement preservation needs. The threshold for chip seal has been increased from 2000 to 5000 ADT (average daily trips).

The Commission asked how projects should be prioritized, both regionally and across the state. The process needs to be transparent.

[Eastern Region Update](#)

[2011 Eastern Region Construction Projects](#)

[Eastern Region Overview](#)

[Ferries Comparison](#)

[Keller Ferry Vessel Replacement](#)

[US 395 North Spokane Corridor](#)

TRIBAL TRANSPORTATION ISSUES AND PERSPECTIVES

Spokane Tribe

Claudia King, Transportation Planner, talked about the complex planning requirements needed to access funding. The Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) requires a 5-year Transportation Improvement Plan and a Draft Transit Plan. The Spokane Tribe works with the North East Washington RTP and the Spokane Regional Transportation Council. The tribe also has been involved in West Plains and Airway Heights planning work.

Only 50 of 350 miles of tribal road are paved. The tribe is turning one paved road back to gravel.

The State should strive to include tribes in state processes and clarify to RTPs tribal eligibility for funding. WSDOT should advocate with BIA for less process, less duplication. Given tribal sovereignty, why should tribes have to go through RTPs at all? There are conflicts between federal laws regarding non-discrimination and tribal preference laws.

Ms. King noted that user fees are incredibly regressive as a funding approach.

Deena Moses talked about the Tribal Transit system, which receives WSDOT funding. There are no jobs on the reservation; the poverty rate is 72% and to get out of poverty, you need to travel off the reservation. Two buses traverse the reservation from the east end to the west end; Wellpinit is in the center of the reservation. There are a lot of riders; the fare is one dollar round trip. But, by the 20th of the month, ridership is down 50%.

“The only thing that is going to make it better for us at home is transportation.”

Commissioners asked how the fuel compact money is spent. The tribal-state fuel tax compact generates about \$1 million a year for the Spokane Tribe. The tribe spends \$600,000 of BIA funds on road maintenance. Megan Nicodemus, WSDOT, suggested the Commission contact Department of Licensing for information on the compact expenditures.

[Kaltran](#)

Kalispel Tribe

Sev Jones, Planning Director, emphasized the importance of transportation to tribes given the demographics and geography of tribes. Kalispel Tribe is 450 members; the reservation is located about an hour north of Spokane.

Julia Seyler talked about Kaltran, the Kalispel Tribal Transit System. It started in May 2009 with Federal Transit Authority funding, but lost it this year. Kaltran started with routes north to Ione, south to North Spokane, and east to Newport. A service reduction eliminated the Newport service. Kaltran now has about 900 riders/month. New funding will allow service extension to Airway Heights; a long-term goal is a transit connection from Usk to Omak.

The Kalispel Tribe participates in both NEW RTPO and SRTC. It has an easier time working with SRTC. Projects would not have been included in the TIP, if she had not been at the table.

EWU Tribal Technical Assistance Program (TTAP)

This program has served 45 tribes in the Pacific NW since 1993. EWU created one of the first Indian Studies programs in the country. It provides training for tribal planners. EWU also is looking at the relationship between smart growth and reservations.

Dr. Winchell pointed out that many of the routes we use today were once tribal trade routes. The BIA roads program is considered to be supplemental funding; it is directed at BIA-owned and tribally-owned roads on reservations, and also intended to be match for state programs.

EWU also helped to create a Guide to Working with Tribal Governments.

Dr. Winchell introduced Sherwin Racehorse, Shoshone-Bannock and William Marchand, Colville Tribe; both are Eisenhower Fellows at EWU studying tribal transportation.

BUSINESS AND TRANSPORTATION: AEROSPACE, AGRICULTURE, HEALTH CARE AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Ryan Stewart, Senior Planner, Spokane Regional Transportation Council shared that there are two primary objectives to the Inland Pacific Hub (IPH) study:

- Assess the IPH capacity as a globally-connected, multi-modal transportation gateway
- Identify the critical infrastructure requirements and strategies needed to drive the IPH future economic growth

IPH Board includes major transportation players in the region. Case comparisons include Duluth/Superior and Tucson.

Currently 60-80 trains a day move through Spokane.

IPH has developed seven directions for the region.

Transportation investments should:

- support value-added development of existing industries, especially in rural areas
- support development of new or emerging industries that will benefit from the ability to ship high-value, low weight goods
- support growth in established industries
- account for external influences as well as local opportunities

Transportation solutions should:

- build upon existing infrastructure and plans

- support the planning of freight-friendly land uses
- consider the region as a large, multi-modal port

Potential IPH investments identified:

- Improve Spokane International Airport
- Consolidate and coordinate shipments
- Enhance rural telecommunications infrastructure
- Complete North Spokane Corridor
- Improve US-2 between NSC and Sandpoint
- Bypass routes
- Enhance north-south rail link to Canada
- Support double-stack intermodal facility
- Implement border crossing efficiencies
- Road network improvements to ports
- Consistent trucking regulations

Aviation Policy, Planning and Investment

Larry Krauter, CEO of Spokane International Airport, talked about aviation issues. For instance, airlines don't pay taxes into Airway Trust Fund on ancillary fees. Passenger Facility Charges are capped at \$4 and have not increased legislatively in many years.

NextGen will create a airway superhighway, but it will create chaos if it lands air traffic on a "country road." Air travel needs to strengthen rubber-tire solutions and plan for steel-wheel future.

Associated Painters is leasing a new hanger at SIA, providing 40 jobs at \$42-\$50k and benefits.

Spokane International is part of a coalition working on sustainable fuels; it is partnering on workforce development with Spokane Community College. His to do list:

- Complete FAA Reauthorization
- Reward/incent integrated multi-modal transportation plans

[Aviation Policy, Planning and Investment](#) [Inland Pacific Hub](#)

Tourism and Travel

Cheryl Kilday, Spokane Convention and Visitors Bureau, talked about the weakness of signage on I-90 to get people off the highway. How do we evaluate signage for visitors? What are the opportunities to reopen Welcome Center/Visitor Centers? Electronic media and GPS don't take the place of a real person to answer questions. Rest stops could be visitor centers; the Commission suggested a possible public/private partnership.

The travel industry needs the Commission to partner with us in wayfinding. The Washington Tourism Alliance, a new 501(c)(6), will fill some of the roles of the former Tourism Commission. Every dollar invested in tourism at the state level returns \$11 in taxes; that is \$58.3 million in Spokane area.

Business Climate

Joe Tortorelli, Director of Spokane Good Roads Association and Economic Development consultant, talked about business development and expansion factors. Transportation is a key. One-mile access to a highway is very important, e.g. Boeing/Triumph, Goodrich, etc.

Currently it takes 45 minutes for a truck to go from I-90 to Wandermere bridges. After NSC completion, the estimated time would be 11 minutes. It will be a huge freight improvement.

TRANSIT ISSUES, CHALLENGES AND SUCCESSES

Susan Meyer, CEO of Spokane Transit (STA), spoke about How a Great City Moves. Public transportation is like a utility. It is collecting a 0.6% sales tax. Between 2007 and 2009, STA cost per passenger dropped, while it increased at urban transit systems statewide.

STA provides 30 minute service to the airport, from 6:00 am to 10:00 pm.

Paratransit accounts for 19% of STA expenses. Per capita ridership is double that of any WA urban transit system. Why is STA paratransit use so high? Probably because it was charging only 50 cents. No social service agency came forward to administer a low-income grant program. STA has raised the fee to \$1.25 and will increase it to \$1.50 next year.

Fixed route passengers are paying about ½ cost of service; paratransit riders pay about 1/20 cost of service. STA paratransit cost per passenger is \$22.32; for fixed route bus passengers only \$3.72.

We have to live within our means.

- Maintain quality.
- Only essential capital projects.
- Right-size passenger fares. Bus is \$1.50; Paratransit is \$1.25 and will increase to \$1.50 in 2012.
- No ATU wage increases for three years; reopener if economy improves.
- Phased service reductions.
- Preserve foundation for future service.

The Future is the High Performance Transportation Network. It is looking as if electric trolleybus will be the pick for the Brown's Addition to University District route through downtown. It would take up 1/10 cent of remaining sales tax available. The overhead electrification network is evidence of permanence, just like rail.

[Spokane Transit](#)

PUBLIC COMMENT

Paul Locke told the Commission to stop asking for more money. Get creative with the money that you have. Conversations should focus on how to cut costs.

Claudia King believes there is a lack of political will to raise money from broad sources to help those in need.

TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

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ATTEST:

REEMA GRIFFITH, Executive Director

DATE OF APPROVAL