

WASHINGTON STATE TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

Meeting Summary

East Wenatchee, Washington

June 19, 2012

The local meeting of the Washington State Transportation Commission was called to order at 9:00 a.m., on Tuesday, June 19, 2012, at East Wenatchee City Hall, 271 9th Street NE, East Wenatchee, Washington

CHAIR WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Chair Ford opened the meeting with Commissioner and staff introductions.

TRANSPORTATION 101

Commission Staff presented a Transportation 101 Overview.

Dan Sarles, Region Administrator, North Central Region, explained that WSDOT currently uses chip seal on routes with ADT less than 5,000 ADT. In the future, budget limitations will require that WSDOT also use chip seal as a preservation strategy on routes from 10,000 to 25,000 ADT.

[Transportation 101](#)

[NCR Transportation 101](#)

CITY TRANSPORTATION ISSUES, NEEDS AND CHALLENGES

Steve Lacy, Mayor of East Wenatchee, told the Commission he has little to complain about in transportation. There are several projects underway, including completion of Eastmont Avenue, the Grant Avenue improvements and the Sellar Bridge improvements. The City has an application in with TIB to improve 10th Street.

The City also appreciates the transfer of the Loop Trail property.

The City dedicates about 10% of the operating budget to transportation. When all accounts are included, about 20% of the budget is spent on transportation. The City is not banking any of its levy.

The biggest concern is the deterioration of residential streets. The Mayor will be recommending the City use its local option TBD and dedicate the \$20 license fee to residential streets, generating about \$220,000 a year. He hopes to leverage that revenue to do more. East Wenatchee has not discussed a regional TBD with Douglas County.

Steve King, Wenatchee Director of Public Works and Engineering, talked about the transportation successes and challenges in his city. The Wenatchee Valley is a regional hub for commerce in North Central Washington. The City population is 32,000. There are 100 arterial lane miles and 162 residential lane miles.

Transportation funding for preservation and maintenance is \$2.1 million a year. He estimates this funding level is short of the need by \$1.5 million. Capital projects would not be done without grants.

Challenges:

- Being a Regional Center has added costs.
- Conflicts between state highway and downtown main streets.
- Future city growth is confined by topography.
- Retail sales declining and services increasing, with reduced sales tax revenue.
- REET at pre-2000 levels.
- By statute, TBD revenue is focused on preservation of arterials.

The City is not at the maximum levy, but its levy is higher than other cities in the Valley.

City of Wenatchee

Action/Follow-up:None.

COUNTY TRANSPORTATION ISSUES, NEEDS AND CHALLENGES

Ken Stanton, Chair, Douglas County Board of County Commissioners and explained that Douglas County had a \$15 license fee which it shared with the cities. It was very successful, but was removed by Initiative.

We appreciate getting the Loop Trail into local ownership and plan to make some improvements. We plan a Gateway at the Pipeline Bridge.

At the Cascade interchange, there is the opportunity for commercial and industrial development. There is water, but the transportation and wastewater infrastructure is waiting.

Mitch Reister, Chelan County Engineer, talked about Chelan County transportation. Chelan County population is about 72,000. Of the County's 50 bridges, 12 are considered deficient.

Four major road projects are underway (\$7.55 million capital improvements):

- Manson Downtown
- Upper Squilchuck
- Chumstick Highway
- Old Blewett Bridge

Funding levels are inadequate to maintain the system. Average pavement condition is dropping annually. Chelan County is seeking a \$6 million PWTF Loan to bridge the gap.

Photos showed examples of pavement in good, fair and poor condition. A chart showed the projected 5-year pavement condition.

Other issues:

- Drainage and stormwater runoff
- Increased regulatory requirements
- NEPA-triggered Environmental Justice review upon FHWA observation of orchards
- Facilities Management

- The Unplanned
 - 3 Declared Emergencies. Total cost \$340k, reimbursed \$164k
- Public Expectation Challenges
 - Finding time for everyday needs
 - 150 service requests to date/drainage and pavement most popular
- Gas tax and PILT (payment in lieu of taxes paid on federal land) revenue are slowly declining

A Road benefit district has been considered but would generate only \$500k. The property tax is under the maximum levy rate; currently at \$1.32/\$1000. Diversion currently is limited to one Sherriff deputy funded from road fund at about \$120k/yr. This deputy helps enforce weight restrictions and safety in work zones.

Chelan County is assessing public priorities, setting goals, reporting and evaluating, and adopting LEAN Practices. To improve public knowledge of the transportation challenge, Chelan County is planning to do a citizen survey and hold some open houses.

Commissioner Litt pointed out that 87% of Chelan County is federal land. Many of the arterials lead to federal lands for logging and recreation.

[Transportation Challenges in Chelan County](#)

Action/Follow-up:None.

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION ISSUES, NEEDS AND CHALLENGES

Richard DeRock, Executive Director, Link Transit, explained that his PTBA covers 3200 sq. miles, serves 111,000 residents with 60 buses, and moves 1.1 million passengers a year.

He talked about the revenue challenges facing transit. Actual sales tax revenue for Link is down 8% since 2007 and collections are 27% lower than expected. Federal funding is down 2%.

Uncontrolled cost drivers have increased substantially since 2007. Link has increased fare revenue by 63% and reduced service by 12%.

Current and Future Concerns:

- State allocated federal grants. Link has twice had to notify public of rural service cuts because of state delays.
- Special needs funding rules have penalized Link for moving people from paratransit to regular service.
- Connectivity v. productivity policies have required higher-use routes to be cut.
- Stability and predictability of service.
- Capital replacement funding.
- Availability of federal funding.

Link moves a lot of people between Wenatchee and Leavenworth, Chelan. About 20% of people crossing the Wenatchee River Bridge are on buses.

Link has 5 ultra-fast charge battery trolleys. Their minimum range is 18 miles with a maximum recharge time of 5-7 minutes. Diesel is expensive, especially in NCW, which is remote on the supply chain. Although many transit agencies are converting to natural gas, it is not an option in Wenatchee. Electricity is cheap and plentiful.

Monthly energy cost:

- Electricity -- \$94.05 at 2.4 cents/kwh
- Diesel -- \$1,381 at \$3.22/gallon

Capital cost of the vehicle is about the same.

Link paratransit budget is \$2.6 million; about 25% of the Link budget. Paratransit fare covers less than one percent of the cost. Fare revenue covers 10% of the cost of the regular Link service. A lot of people use paratransit because there are no sidewalks, no curbscuts. Link paid to have curbscuts installed at the hospital.

Medicaid transportation must be provided by a private broker. In this area, the broker sends most trips to Link. Link is reimbursed only the fare, not the cost of providing the trip.

Commissioners asked the Transit industry to bring the Commission suggestions about ways to reduce paratransit costs. Also, what share of the burden should be borne by social services programs.

Tom Hanson, WSDOT talked about other public transportation service. The Apple Line provides one round trip a day between Omak and Ellensburg. Leavenworth Amtrak service had 8132 riders in 2011 and 3337 in the first five months of 2012. The Health Shuttle is a partnership between Grant Transit, People for People, WSDOT, Link and Wenatchee Valley Medical Center.

The Yakima-Ellensburg Commuter began in November 2011. It makes 14 roundtrips a day and has already reached 20,000 riders. With \$3.00 fare, there is currently a 31% farebox recovery.

[LINK Transit Issues and Projects](#)
[Transportation Partnerships](#)

Action/Follow-up: Ask the transit industry to bring the Commission suggestions about ways to reduce paratransit costs. Review the burden on transportation for social services programs.

PORT ISSUES, NEEDS AND CHALLENGES

Lisa Parks, Executive Director, Port of Douglas County; Mark Spurgeon, Port of Douglas Commissioner; Mark Urdahl, Executive Director, Port of Chelan County and Mike Mackey, Port of Chelan Commissioner shared a Port perspective.

Port of Chelan talked about two projects:

- Peshastin Bridge across the Wenatchee River -- \$7 to \$10 million – to replace an operationally deficient structure that lacks sidewalks. The new bridge would provide a second access to Peshastin, improve freight mobility, and open up a new business park.
- Improved signage on I-90 for North Cascades National Park/Lake Chelan.

Port of Douglas talked about economic development opportunities:

- Pangborn Airport Business Park, 40 acres adjacent to the airport for commercial/industrial development
- North End feasibility study. This involves the Cascade interchange, SR 28, US 2 and US 97. Using the rural sales and tax, Port of Douglas is looking at utility and transportation issues, and doing a market feasibility study prior to seeking CERB funding.

[Port of Chelan County](#)

Action/Follow-up: None.

LOCAL FUNDING CHALLENGES

Jeff Wilkins, Executive Director, Wenatchee Valley Transportation Council and Richard DeRock, Executive Director, LINK Transit talked about local funding challenges.

Practical limitations of local options:

- Insufficient flexibility
- Revenue at councilmanic levels won't fund the deficits
- Limited success with voters at higher TBD amounts

\$100 license fees would replace only 1/3 of the amount rolled back by the Legislature in 2000.

Local options alone will not bridge the gap. Direct user fees cannot solely support rural highways and public transit. These are public goods that require subsidies.

Communities are making tough choices. Already, due to cutbacks, Douglas County doesn't have a sheriff on patrol 24/7. What is the future we want to see in the state?

Commissioners reminded the audience that the statewide need is \$10 – 20 billion over 10 years. Last year, the Commission recommended a 10 cent gas tax increase now and a penny a year more for 10 years.

Education is very important. Most people in NCW think they are subsidizing projects in Central Puget Sound. One key to passing a tax increase is telling people how and where the money will be spent. We also have to credibly convey the alternatives, e.g., the consequences of inaction.

Commissioners asked why a statewide vote would be easier than a local vote. Jeff and Richard responded that they are not sure that a statewide vote is easier, but emphasized that you can't raise enough money locally to solve the problems.

[Regional Funding Challenges](#)

Action/Follow-up:None.

AIRPORT EXPANSION AND THE NCW ECONOMY

Mark Urdahl, Executive Director, Port of Chelan County and Mark Spurgeon, Port of Douglas Commissioner shared that in NCW, Pangborn Field is the on-ramp to the world. Rather than a

freeway, it is our access to the world. The airport has brought economic development from tourism to server farms.

The main 5700' runway needs a \$22 million expansion to accommodate larger aircraft. Relocating the road and utilities is about half the project cost. Airlines are making a transition to larger commercial aircraft. FAA has allocated funding and the Environmental Assessment has been done. FAA reauthorization has now doubled the local share from 5% to 10%.

The ports have applied for a Small Community Air Service Development Grant to improve its marketing effort.

Commissioners remarked that the bargain of deregulation was that Congress would subsidize the small airports.

Action/Follow-up: None.

REGIONAL VISIONS FOR TRANSPORTATION

Jeff Wilkins and Dan Sarles explained that it costs \$160 – 200k per year to open the North Cascades Highway. It is a major tourism corridor.

Future transportation needs:

- Urban mobility driven by MPO plan
- Outside the urban core, safety, agricultural freight and tourism

Solutions include:

- New passing lanes
- Aggressive maintenance
- ITS
- Regional rail lines

SR 28 Eastside Corridor total cost estimated at \$250 - \$300 million. Only Stage I is funded.

US 2/97 and SR 285 interchange: Options range from \$32 to \$38 million.

Jeff Wilkens explained that the \$60 - \$70 million Sellar Bridge project is underway, the Eastside Corridor vision is well-developed, and the Wenatchee connections are next. The North Wenatchee Avenue solution is a mirror of the Eastside Corridor; a new two-lane corridor, the “Confluence Parkway,” from US 2 to North Wenatchee and Miller. Cost estimate of \$188 - \$231 million.

Commissioners noted that the RTPOs have done a great job of letting the Legislature know what their priorities are.

Paths to the future:

1. Federal and state funding is restored
2. Funding partially improves
3. Status quo funding levels with a structural shift to preserving and modernizing.

[SR 285 Corridor Plan](#)
[Transportation Issues in the Greater Wenatchee Area](#)

Action/Follow-up: None.

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

Paul W. Locke said that people who depend on investment income no longer have any money coming in. Government projects have got to go to a cash flow and only buy what you have money for.

COMMISSION BUSINESS

Commissioner Litt moved, second by Commissioner Haley to approve the TNB and Seattle Meeting minutes.

Jeanne Jerrod, an elder of the Colville Tribe, thanked WSDOT for the process soliciting names and recommended that the Commission name the vessel Sanpoil.

The name represents the river, the people of the community, and the valley through which the river travels.

Ernest Brooks, Vice Chairman of the Colville Tribes, supported the naming.

Commissioner Haley moved adoption of the Resolution, seconded by Commissioner Parker. Keith Metcalf, WSDOT Regional Administrator read the Resolution. Commissioner Cowan noted that many other letters and comments supported naming the vessel Sanpoil.

The Resolution was unanimously adopted, naming the vessel “Sanpoil.”

Commissioner Ford and Philip Parker nominated Dan O’Neal as Chair and Tom Cowan as Vice-Chair for the coming year, beginning in July. The nominations were approved.

The Commission began discussion of two letters regarding freight movement.

1. Commissioner Parker moved the Commission adopt the letter regarding the Arena with some editorial modifications; Commissioner Cowan seconded the motion. Commissioner O’Neal noted that the traffic study was not a complete analysis. Commissioner Litt added that more study needs to be done. The Commission unanimously agreed.
2. Commissioner Ford noted that the Commission’s 2006 Rail Study indicated that the rail system is close to capacity. Since then, some improvements have been made, but not all. Impacts on existing freight business should be considered and BNSF should indicate how they are going to improve the system.

Commissioner O’Neal said that there are a lot of issues to be considered. The environmental issues are substantial but beyond the Commission’s purview. One of the conclusions of the study was that more capacity is needed.

Commissioner Parker commented that the state cannot tell the railroad what to haul or how to haul it.

Commissioner Cowan indicated his support for the Draft letter. He said that the letter should be limited only to transportation impacts.

Commissioner Ford suggested that the letter refer to the Commission 2006 Study. He believes the grade crossing issue is preempted.

Commissioner Haley asked why the Commission is writing and for whom.

Commissioner Tortorelli said that six coal trains a day are coming through Spokane. There is a plan for mitigating the grade-crossing impacts of the existing and future train traffic.

Commissioner O'Neal thinks the letter should be sent to BNSF, regarding the transportation and economic impacts. He suggests a more cooperative approach; they know that they impact the public.

Commissioner Litt agrees with writing about the grade crossing impacts.

Consensus to write to BNSF, with copies to the Corps.

[Naming the WSDOT Lake Roosevelt Ferry](#)

Meeting adjourned at 4:15 pm.

TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

DICK FORD, Chair

PHILIP PARKER, Vice-Chair

TOM COWAN, Member

DAN O'NEAL, Member

JERRY LITT, Member

ANNE HALEY, Member

JOE TORTORELLI, Member

ATTEST:

REEMA GRIFFITH, Executive Director

DATE OF APPROVAL