

Commute Trip Reduction Board

Meeting Summary

February 27, 2009

Statewide Videoconference

WSDOT HQ, Olympia

WSDOT UCO/Goldsmith Bldg., Seattle

WSDOT Regional HQ, Vancouver

WSDOT Regional HQ, Spokane

WSDOT Regional HQ, Yakima

Board Members Present: Brian Lagerberg (Olympia), Ted Horobiowski (Spokane), Aurora Crooks (Spokane), Kim Becklund (Seattle), Liz Warman (Seattle), Bill Roach (Seattle), Lynn Frosch (Seattle), Marilyn Young Skogland (Seattle), Mike Harbour (Olympia), Peter Hurley (Vancouver), and Page Scott (Yakima).

Board Members Not Present: Joyce Phillips, Charlie Howard, Matt Hansen, Matt Ransom, and Robin Rettew.

WSDOT Staff: Keith Cotton (Olympia), Kathy Johnston (Olympia), Michele Villnave (Olympia), Kathy Leotta (Seattle), Ron Gross (Olympia), and Jef Lucero (Olympia).

Audience: Ed Stern, City of Poulsbo (Port Orchard); Mark Melnyk, Community Transit (Seattle); Monica Babine, WSU (Seattle); Bryan Curtain, YVCOG (Yakima); Karen Parkhurst, Thurston Regional Planning Council (Olympia); Joan Cullen, Office of General Administration (Olympia); and Andrew Austin, Transportation Choices Coalition (Olympia).

Introductions and board business

Brian began by going over some of the state's new approaches to cost savings and efficiencies. Travel to Portland is now considered out-of-state. The Spokane CTR Board meeting may have to be reconsidered. The notebook for the CTR Board is being eliminated as a cost-cutting measure. All materials will be made available on the board's website. Brian mentioned that the Public Transportation conference will not be held this year, adding that the decision has been made to make the conference a biannual event. Brian then introduced Kathy Leotta, the new data analysis manager for WSDOT's Public Transportation Division. He also introduced Ron Gross, a new employee in the division.

Brian then went over WSDOT's informal ground rules for the videoconference setting. He added that board members should keep track of ideas and concerns about this process and submit them as a means of improving it. Bill suggested we do a cost savings study for this meeting, adding that such a study could be useful when presenting to the Legislature. Factors to consider in this study include time spent on travel, meals and refreshments, staff considerations, and travel reimbursements. Karen Parkhurst suggested that environmental measures be evaluated as well, such VMT and greenhouse gas reductions. Brian noted that all aspects will be explored as we look at whether and how often the board should meet in person.

Public comment

Ed Stern and Monica Babine thanked the board on the part of the Kitsap Telework Project for meeting via videoconference and for its support of the project. Monica mentioned a recent study that indicates participating organizations are seeing sizable returns on their telework investments.

Legislative Update

Keith went over the ten CTR-related bills currently up for consideration in either house. Four of these relate directly to CTR; the other six are climate change bills or relate to broader policy issues. He added that the cutoff for transportation bills to be heard is next Monday.

The first bill discussed was SB 6018, which would establish a statewide telework program. Keith then mentioned SB 5364 (companion in the House is HB 1432), which would modify the existing CTR tax credit program. A complication has arisen with this bill, as it is being interpreted by some as a tax increase, so some substitute language is being developed.

The next bill discussed was SB 5995 (companion in the House is HB 2087), which would eliminate certain boards and commissions, including the CTR Board. A substitute version of 5995 passed out of committee. Brian noted that the WSDOT fiscal note for this bill makes clear that eliminating the CTR Board would prove more costly to the state than retaining it. Brian indicated that Senator Jarrett has been working to have the CTR Board removed from the list of boards to be eliminated. Aurora mentioned she worked last week to lobby the business community and jurisdictions to rally support for the board. Liz suggested gathering letters of support from employers willing to provide them.

Keith then talked about SB 6088, which would transfer the duties of the state agency CTR Program from GA to WSDOT. This bill would also expand the existing state agency CTR Program to include all agencies—not just CTR-affected agencies—within the urban growth area comprised of Olympia, Lacey, and Tumwater.

The remaining bills on the list are the climate change bills. SB 5687 (companion in the House is HB 1490) would amend the GMA and mandate transit-oriented development. Keith noted that WSDOT supports the bill but has concerns. Peter asked that WSDOT staff email any of WSDOT's concerns to the board.

Keith then went over the rest of the climate change related bills including SB 5735 (companion in the House is HB 1819), which is the cap and trade bill. Bill mentioned that the bill has moved forward, but the Senate version has gone from a mandatory to a voluntary requirement. Liz added that industry testimony has suggested waiting for federal guidelines to be established before moving this forward at the state level.

Bill asked about a SB 6064 that would merge the four transit agencies in the Seattle area, and whether WSDOT has yet taken a position on it. Brian replied that he'd check on it, but hasn't heard of any bill analysis for it yet.

Kim talked about her recent meeting with Senator Jarrett. He indicated that the multimodal account is not necessarily protected in the funding process. He added that aiming for the funding levels proposed in the Governor's budget is a well-reasoned approach. Kim added that Jarrett also suggested using some of the vanpool funding toward TRPP—especially if it's the difference between keeping and eliminating the program—and that he likes idea of exclusively focusing TRPP grants on congested corridors.

Kim also talked to the Senator about the bill which would eliminate the CTR Board. Jarrett indicated that people are now coming forward to discuss the unintended consequence of costing the state more money by eliminating the board.

Kim added that, in terms of the board's legislative strategy, a number of board members have made timely calls to the appropriate legislators, adding that the two-page handout and performance piece remain effective communication tools. She suggested that the board try to do some drop-in appointments with legislators if possible. Kim asked that anyone interested in participating email her.

January meeting summary

Motion: A motion was entertained to approve the January meeting summary. The motion carried.

Base Funding Decision

Keith began by reviewing the funding policy adopted by the board in 2008. The funding policy is the basis of the funding formula developed by staff. He discussed the parameters of the formula for how the funding would be dispersed, based on worksites and goals for trips reduced by county. He noted that amounts are preliminary until worksite counts and trips to reduce are updated.

Bill asked whether there would be additional worksites in the total. Keith replied that there could be several more in Yakima and Spokane as Moxee is now CTR-affected and Spokane will submit a grandfathering request. The final count of co-located state agency worksites will add more worksites to Thurston County. There was a discussion about the expansion of the CTR program to all state agencies in Lacey, Olympia and Tumwater if SSB 6088 passes. WSDOT is approaching the expansion as more of a GTEC-type program, rather than a per-worksite program, but the expansion would definitely affect the total in Thurston County. The fiscal note for the bill notes that more funding would be needed to administer the expanded program.

Aurora asked about the grandfathering requirements and how to apply. Keith and Kathy will put together a short form for jurisdictions to use when requesting to be grandfathered into the funding formula. WSDOT will bring the formula and proposed distribution back to the May meeting, or after the budget has been passed and the worksite counts and trips-reduced goals are finalized.

Motion: A motion was entertained to adopt the base funding formula. The motion carried.

2009 Work Plan Decision

Kathy began by outlining the board's proposed work plan for this year. As it is currently configured, the work plan serves as a timetable by which the board should complete its tasks for the rest of 2009. Kathy went over the five outcomes and four deliverables included in the plan. The work plan also coordinates the efforts of the board and its committees, staff, and the TAG. Kathy added that the roadmap component of the work plan is being developed now in order to align short-term policy and program goals with long-term objectives.

Marilyn asked whether program measurement is a required element. Kathy replied that it is required, and asked if “seek new funding opportunities” should be included in the plan. Bill suggested it be added to the CTR roadmap as an outcome. Peter asked about the CAT process and why it was deleted. Keith replied that the CAT process is done, so it’s run its course. Peter would like to see the CAT outcomes discussed as part of the roadmap. Joan Cullen asked if the state agency piece includes the GMAP process. Kathy replied that it does.

Brian suggested to Kim that the Legislative committee focus on outcomes and deliverables in the work plan when working with legislators. He added that making compelling connections to the board’s work for the future is just as important as the work the board is doing today. Kim replied that the board has a unique timeliness to its position as an advocate, adding that the board has the ability to advance the Governor’s environmental goals.

Mike asked about the Vanpool 2020 plan, mentioning that transit operators are meeting at the end of March. Keith replied that the goal is to work with the operators this year to get the plan together and to identify the main issues the operators wish to address in that plan.

Bill asked whether the roadmap should be further developed to incorporate a timetable of its own. Brian replied that, as it is designed, the roadmap meets the intent of the statute, which takes us to 2011. Keith added that there’s both a short and long term view the board can take. Kathy indicated that she would add the longer term (2020) roadmap to the work plan.

Motion: A motion was entertained to approve the board’s 2009 work plan. The motion carried.

More Board Business

Peter mentioned that he’d like to discuss the energy efficiency block grants and the use of that federal money for TDM projects. Liz said it would be helpful to know what the parameters of the grants are. Peter replied that if you read the language of the bill, it explicitly calls out transportation efficiency as a component, along with signal synchronization, behavior change, and location efficiency.

Peter added that the City of Portland anticipates receiving \$4-6 million in formula grants, divided equally between energy efficiency and demand management. Bill suggested members of the board get together and talk about these federal grant opportunities. Keith said he will arrange a discussion with Matt Hansen, Charlie and others about these grants. Kim added that she would help out as well, suggesting that Charlie could take the lead.

Monica Babine asked about the compressed work week pilot study the Governor called for last year. She noted that the study will be wrapping at the end of March, and suggested that the results of the study be added to a future board agenda. Brian replied that Joyce would be a good person to do a presentation, as her agency took part in the pilot.

Western Climate Initiative Update

Tony Usibelli began by noting that the WCI goes back to Governor Locke's administration. He added that by establishing mandatory greenhouse gas reduction goals last year (HB 2815), Washington became the first state to tie those goals to investments in green jobs and clean energy industry. Today, the WCI is an 11-piece consortium comprised of eight states and three Canadian provinces whose respective Governors and Premiers signed an MOA with three specific purposes: establish a regional greenhouse gas reduction goal, create a climate registry, and design a multi-sector, market-based mechanism for reducing greenhouse gases.

Tony then discussed the three primary options for enforcing greenhouse gas reductions. The first of these is traditional regulation, such as the Clear Air Act. The second is a carbon tax, such as that recently implemented by the province of British Columbia. The third approach is cap-and-trade, in which a target (cap) is established, then a mechanism by which to meet the goal (trade) is employed. Tony explained that the cap-and-trade system gets reductions at a lower cost and closer to a precise outcome. He added that least expensive methods for reaching the goals are the ones that get into the market, which drives innovation, investments in new technologies, and improvements to existing ones.

Kim asked which method has the best chance to raise money the fastest. Tony replied that auction allocations could create revenues immediately. He added that the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative has raised significant amounts of money for some states on the east coast, money that can be used to fund green technology or rebates to offset general revenue decreases.

Tony then went over the guidelines and principles for basic guidance on how a basic regional cap-and-trade program would work. In 2012, large stationary sources and emissions from fossil fuel-fired electric power plants are first target. In 2015, transportation fuels and other fuels such as natural gas producers serving residential and smaller commercial areas are addressed. This covers 85-90 percent of emissions in a cap-and-trade system. Other recommendations regarding minimum auction levels and emitters that won't have direct obligations to make reductions are still being developed.

Tony mentioned that a national system is preferable to a regional system. However, at the time the WCI was conceived, there was little momentum or support for a national system. Since the WCI was formed, similar groups on the East Coast and in the Midwest have formed. National leadership is now watching this regional system intently. It's possible these regional systems will be overtaken by one on a national scale, or that a national system will simply be a recognition of the regional systems.

The WCI has just come out with its work plans this week. Components of the plan include a refined reporting system and detailed rules for an "offset" system. The group continues its work to set up a market system that is not subject to manipulation, or excessive speculation. The WCI is also developing regional modeling on pricing.

On the state level, California has legal authority to move forward with its cap-and-trade system, as do the participating Canadian provinces. Utah has administrative authority, while Washington still needs authorization from the Legislature to participate regionally. There are two bills currently in either House that would formalize some of the structuring for Washington's inclusion by 2012.

Kim asked about timing and costs, and whether there are good estimates relative to the benefit. Tony replied that a “cost of doing nothing” study was released last week. He added that the cost of implementation is approximately \$1 million, which is in the Governor’s budget.

Bill asked whether the carbon tax is still being discussed for Washington. Tony replied that the carbon tax is not being considered in this state, and that the Executive branch has already determined that a cap-and-trade system is less expensive and allows for greater certainty in reduction than a carbon tax system.

Meeting wrap up

Peter suggested a discussion on SR 520 and I-90 for the next meeting. Bill suggested that the board leave open the option of doing another videoconference. Aurora mentioned that she needs to know as soon as possible if and when any changes are made to the Spokane meeting.

Action item review

- Jef will email information and materials about House Bill 1490 to the Board, per Peter’s request
- Board members should email Kim if they would like to help with calling on legislators or write letters of support for the board
- Keith and Kathy will develop a form for jurisdictions to use when requesting to be grandfathered into the funding formula, as allowed by the funding policy
- Keith will arrange a discussion with Matt Hansen, Charlie and others about the energy efficiency block grant, per Bill’s request
- Board will send feedback on videoconference to Jef
- Jef will compile the cost savings and environmental impact of using videoconference for the board meeting
- Jef will send out Tony’s WCI presentation

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 12:30 p.m.