

Commute Trip Reduction Board

Meeting Summary

March 27, 2009

Thurston Regional Planning Council

2424 Heritage Court SW, Suite A

Olympia, WA 98502

Board Members Present: Brian Lagerberg, Kim Becklund, Aurora Crooks, Liz Warman (via teleconference), Bill Roach, Lynn Frosch, Marilyn Young Skogland, Mike Harbour, Peter Hurley, Joyce Phillips, Charlie Howard, Robin Rettew, Matt Hansen, and Page Scott.

Board Members Not Present: Matt Ransom and Ted Horobiowski.

WSDOT Staff: Keith Cotton, Kathy Johnston, Casey Kanzler, Kathy Leotta, and Jef Lucero.

Audience: Lon Wyrick, Thurston Regional Planning Council; Jessica Holden, Tacoma/Pierce County Chamber of Commerce; Gloria Newby, City of Redmond; Community Transit; Monica Babine, WSU; Joan Cullen, Office of General Administration; Karen Parkhurst, Thurston Regional Planning Council; Jennifer Hass, Community Transit; Debbie Anderson, Community Transit; and Andrew Austin, Transportation Choices Coalition.

Introductions and board business

Brian began by introducing Lon Wyrick for a safety briefing. Brian also noted that Kim and Matt Hansen's terms with the board expire at the end of June. They were apprised that they need to send an email to Brian and Kathy (with a résumé or their board application attached) confirming that they wish to serve another term.

Kathy then talked about the travel logistics for the Spokane meeting next month. She also went over some of the results from the videoconference survey, adding that some of the feedback acquired through the survey process will be used as a consideration for the work plan. Brian mentioned that WSDOT Chief of Staff Steve Reinmuth saw this as a great learning experience for the agency.

Brian noted that the Commute Smart Awards, reinstated last summer, will continue as an opportunity for the state to recognize employers across the state for their CTR efforts. He then gave a quick update on the Kitsap Telework project. Brian also spoke about WSDOT staff efficiencies, as they relate to technical assistance. Keith and Kathy have been talking to the jurisdictions about streamlining and standardizing reporting processes. Aurora commented that she appreciates the support WSDOT staff continue to provide, citing the efforts of Amber Nguyen, who provides statewide assistance in the CTR survey process.

Public comment

Joyce passed around a brochure for a school program selling climate change awareness-themed shirts. She added that she attended a webinar on the topic of vehicle idling at schools. Jessica Holden offered a brief update on the Tacoma GTEC.

February meeting summary

Motion: A motion was entertained to approve the February meeting summary, with one minor change. The motion carried.

Legislative Update

Kim began by going over the Senate transportation budget, which eliminates the TRPP program and does not provide additional funds for the GTEC program. There is little funding in the Senate budget, while the House budget will likely come out early next week. She added that she is hoping to meet with Representative Clibborn later today. Clibborn was helpful in getting the Efficiency Act passed, but this time around CTR is competing with a lot of other interests.

Kim thanked those who have already contacted Clibborn's office and thanked to Matt Hansen for testifying before the Senate Transportation Committee yesterday. Andrew Austin mentioned that a letter is being prepared by the environmental lobby and CTR is a piece of that. Kim added that email is also an effective means of communicating with Representative Clibborn.

Bill asked about the GTEC and vanpool funding and whether it is helpful to focus on specific components rather than the overall program. Kim replied that the message should be tailored to specific legislators. Charlie asked Kim if she'd gotten a sense from Senator Jarrett about the Senate budget and whether the decision to limit funding for CTR was about money or the program. Kim replied that it was strictly about money.

Peter asked whether CTR took disproportionate cuts in the Senate budget, as opposed to other multimodal or broader programs. Andrew replied that the Senate budget is equally hard on multimodal programs, with the exception of the regional mobility grants. Brian added that the Senate budget doesn't cut the base CTR level, but does not increase the budget to include GTEC, which got only one-time funding the previous biennium.

Matt Hansen talked about his testimony, going over the materials he presented before the STC. He suggested the packet include the letter from the Tacoma/Pierce Chamber provided by Jessica Holden. Matt also asked the business representatives on the board for statements of support. Marilyn replied that she spoke with her board's members and that at least two of them made calls. Matt also asked that the jurisdiction representatives talk to their customers and ask them to weigh in on CTR's behalf.

Aurora mentioned that she supports targeting support of the entire program. She asked Kim to talk about the board elimination bill. Kim replied it was her understanding that those bills are dead, but Brian mentioned that it is likely they will reemerge. Kim added that Senator Jarrett would also advocate for having the board removed from the list of eliminated boards if the bill indeed comes back.

Kim stressed the importance of board members continuing to contact legislators in either House, then added that she'd just been contacted by a member of Clibborn's staff, who informed her that CTR figures prominently in the House budget. Mike cautioned that the board shouldn't just focus on the House side, where it appears CTR is in better shape. Bill mentioned that he might be able to meet with Senator Ed Murray on Sunday at an open house event.

Bill asked about the bill that was going to roll the King County-area transit agencies into one. Mike replied that it's likely dead. Keith then 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.

"Grandfather" Request

Kathy began by noting the board passed its funding policy for grandfathering in December. The two cities requesting to be grandfathered in, Cheney and Medical Lake, have had programs since 1991, and meet the other qualifying criteria. Kathy added that WSDOT staff recommends both cities for inclusion in the grandfathering formula. Bill asked about the fiscal impact this would have. Aurora replied that they're already in the funding formula, so no additional funding is necessary.

Matt Hansen asked if it was possible that other cities might make similar requests. Keith replied that this month is the cutoff for grandfathering requests. Page commented that these types of jurisdictions deserve the board's recognition. Bill clarified that he supports the request, but wants to be sure the board keeps the fiscal impacts in mind.

Motion: A motion was entertained to adopt the grandfathering request. The motion carried.

SR 520 Update

Brian began by noting that this isn't just an update on 520 but on TDM efforts along all major corridors. Budget concerns continue to be a challenge, but with new funding sources many projects are moving ahead, and the need for construction traffic mitigation continues. Regionally, there are a lot of overlapping projects, and the need to look at these projects on a system-wide scale is growing. The reason SR 520 is here as an agenda item today is that, along these lines, it's the biggest project with the most variables. There are currently 50-100 different demand management projects underway in the corridor right now. WSDOT continues to look at establishing a formalized coordination role between these projects.

Peter asked about the type of structure WSDOT would like to see around the central Puget Sound's TDM programs, and the selection process for identifying which projects to fund. Brian replied that much of the structure is already in place, and that coordination between WSDOT and its partners as they work to establish roles and responsibilities remains a constant—if somewhat fluid—focus. He added that the selection process has much to do with identifying and quantifying demonstrated, reachable goals for traffic mitigation.

Peter talked about potential operating performance standards for the CRC once it is completed, noting that it will be interesting to see how those standards evolve. Brian replied that the CRC is unique in that the governors of both states signed a memorandum that codifies those performance standards and goals, something no other project has. He added that there are standards and goals but they are not tied to specific projects. Peter noted that it might not make sense to have separate goals for the Puget Sound megaprojects, because they're so close together.

Bill commented that the challenge of getting project managers to understand TDM strategies is tough enough, let alone getting them to implement them in their projects. He noted that there is a lot of data out there that can better educate them, and that the board should consider workshops for project managers to better educate them on why TDM needs to be integrated from the outset. Aurora noted that this is also an educational opportunity for planners, not just managers and engineers.

Robin mentioned that timing is important, that the best opportunity for getting TDM in the discussion is early in the scoping process. She added that this is the peak of the construction program and the time for implementing TDM strategies is now. Brian talked about TDM opportunities as they relate to the current tolling discussions. He added that as the 520 project managers better identify and understand their targets, they can better develop them. Bill replied that WSDOT should take that process and use it with other project managers.

Federal Funding Opportunities for Demand Management

Keith began by going over the block grant opportunity package released by the Department of Energy yesterday. The purpose of this grant program is to reduce emissions, reduce energy consumption, and improve energy efficiency in the building and transportation sectors. Several CTR-related programs are eligible, such as employee flex work time, satellite work centers, bike lanes, pedestrian walkways, planning activities, and incentives. Washington is getting \$56 million through the program, the majority of which is going directly to cities and counties.

Peter explained that this is not a competitive process. Programs will have to apply for the grants, but are not in competition with one another. Matt Hansen added that each unit of government needs to come up with a project list and understand the scope, understand the uses of the resources, prioritize them, and get the word out.

Joyce noted that the CTED Energy Policy office is getting the money, adding CTED's new director has made this a top priority for the agency right now. Bill asked about the deadline for applications, adding that a communication to that effect would be very helpful. Keith replied that for these particular grants, local governments need to apply by June 25. Bill replied that once the Legislature determines the level of GTEC funding, the board and its partners can move forward with applying if need be. Joyce added that some of the folks working on these grants for CTED are very familiar with GTEC. Bill suggested a formal communication between the state agencies and local jurisdictions would be useful.

Keith stated that he will send a summary of these grants and the processes for applying over email. Joyce noted that CTED has developed a website with this information as well. Brian added we'll develop a strategy once Keith sends out the summary, mentioning that it might make sense to have a group of board members get together to discuss this further. Brian also added that the CMAQ process is looking at ways to support GTEC funding and implementation at the federal level. Peter mentioned the SEP program, which has transportation-based grant opportunities. He will look for more information and send it out to the board.

GTEC Funding Policy

Casey began by citing two outcomes from today's meeting: establishing the 2009 GTEC working group, and creating a policy framework from which the working group and WSDOT staff can work to set up grant application and scoring guidelines. Aurora volunteered to be on the next working group. Peter asked about the number of meetings. Casey replied that it would be no more than two, and only one would need to be in person. The rest of the commitment involves staying in email contact.

Casey then went over the three eligibility options for GTEC funding: only those already funded; those funded plus the voluntaries (designated); and setting aside planning funds for additional GTECs. Bill noted that it would be helpful to know whether the program will be funded by the Legislature before moving this forward. Casey replied that establishing this now will make for a seamless transition. Aurora added that there is also some urgency due to the need to work out the contracts. Brian and Page stated that they favor option two, funding the designated GTECs.

Casey then talked about the scoring prioritization. If the voluntary GTECs are funded, they will be scored differently, with focus not just on scope and budget, but deliverables as well. The four-year plan that was the basis for scoring is still certified, the grant applications will still be taken back to the RTPOs to ensure that they meet their certification requirements. Charlie cautioned that RTPOs may not have staff available to help, as many are facing big cuts in federal funding and layoffs may be coming.

Casey then went over potential changes to the plans, such as what deliverables will be carried over, and those which will be added or removed. He noted that the budget piece will be the working group's biggest task. Each jurisdiction will propose an operating budget, and once the working group sets the funding levels, WSDOT staff will negotiate with each jurisdiction to adjust its scope to meet the budget.

Casey then talked about some of the scoring criteria: past performance, strength of proposed outcomes, demonstration of local partnerships. Bill asked Casey to define "strength of proposed outcomes". Casey replied that it is a call to them to invest in their programs. Brian added that the use of the word "strong" is intentionally vague to allow for some flexibility for realistic approaches and idealistic intentions. Karen Parkhurst asked about the local match process. Casey replied that the working group will provide that guidance.

Casey then went over the funding schedule, noting that it is very aggressive. May 1 is the deadline to submit grant applications. The technical group will review them individually, and then the board will review the group's recommendations and make a final funding decision. WSDOT staff would then draft contracts for signature and get them signed by the end of June. Casey noted that one of the goals is to make this as simple of possible for both implementers and reviewers, so that process can be expedited.

The following board members then volunteered to be on this year's technical working group: Aurora, Matt Hansen, Peter, Bill, and Lynn. Casey will follow up with Ted to see if he is interested in being involved once he returns from his vacation.

RideshareOnline Update

Casey announced that WSDOT has selected a vendor for the upgrade, and a contract is in place. WSDOT staff, the vendor, and other primary stakeholders (transit agencies and WSU) are now going through a requirements gathering phase, so the vendor can reorganize its timeline for the deliverables. This working group has just completed the fifth of what will likely be eight or nine, three-hour work sessions. The new commute calendar is a big piece. There's no timeline right now, but once the requirements gathering is finished, the process will be reorganized so that it fits needs and meets expectations.

Peter asked if the commute calendar will ask about specific facilities or travel routes. Brian replied that if the new RSO is integrated with tolling, it could be corridor-specific. Lynn asked whether there is an end date. Casey replied that it will likely be this fall.

Lynn then asked why user groups are not part of the primary group. Casey replied that a secondary requirements gathering phase will collect other perspectives, such as those from employers and end users. Bill said that getting users involved from the beginning would be very beneficial to this process, cautioning that excluding them will result in getting too much of a provider-based perspective. Lynn and Aurora agreed, suggesting emails be sent to ETCs of large employers to solicit feedback. Brian noted that some end user input is being gathered right now through the Olympia GTEC and its use of the new calendar.

Brian asked the group for suggestions for a more effective process. Lynn replied that better transparency or communication along the way, suggesting that a feedback forum would be useful. Aurora added that financial accountability is important for her county, noting that they want to be sure what they are paying for. Brian replied that there will be opportunities for the user to provide feedback along the way. Matt Hansen noted that user interface focus groups might also be a good idea. Peter asked Lynn if she thought soliciting feedback from Microsoft staff on this topic would be a good idea. Lynn replied she could bring this to a research and development team and report back.

CTR Roadmap

Brian began by talking about CTR guiding principles, adding that developing a set of such principles will help guide the board's vision as it relates to the strategic plan. Kathy then talked about the need for long-term ideas and improvements to our programs, such as increasing flexibility, exploring more funding opportunities, and expanding partnerships. One such opportunity is targeted expansion, in commute, residential, and GTEC. Areas of concentration are measurement, defining the roles of the RTPOs, alternative vehicles and fuels, and defining major employers, and funding.

Brian mentioned that the board used to have guiding principles, noting that the CTR program has evolved, but the principles seemingly haven't along with it. Bill commented that two principles should consider are leverage and pricing. Peter added that climate change should be a big part of these principles, noting that a 2020 vision driven by CTR and TDM strategies must define a leadership role on climate change issues.

Page asked whether there are specifics needed today. Kathy replied that a subcommittee may be convened at the next meeting. Marilyn cautioned that until we have the funding to expand our scope, we need to be careful not to get ahead of ourselves. Brian replied that leveraging our successes, isn't necessarily based on money, adding that this is about

the need to leverage everyone's investments so that they line up in support of the overall objective. He noted the board just needs to have this conversation, as it hasn't taken place in a while.

Kim suggested that it might be time to look at CTR as an over arching principle, adding that we seem to have already evolved from just working on commute trips. Page replied that this board remains the CTR Board, and despite its interest in other TDM issues, the board should remain focused on that which it has been charged. Bill noted that horizon or direction should be a principle, as a means of keeping the board within its charge. Aurora added that the board stay focused on CTR, but that a broader vision allows for more opportunities, funding, evolution, and freshness.

Action item review

- Jef will email STC and HTC email lists to Kim
- Keith will email summary of information on federal funding opportunities to board, and follow up with some outreach to CTR/GTEC implementers
- Keith will also work on developing a committee to support coordination and outreach of local applications for funding
- Peter will email link for SEP grant funding program
- Casey will ask Ted if he'd like to be on the GTEC technical committee
- Matt H. will email CMAQ template to Aurora
- Lynn will talk to R&D folks at Microsoft about software options for RideshareOnline

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 2:30 p.m.