

Commute Trip Reduction Board

Meeting Summary

May 29, 2009

WSDOT

HQ Commission Board Room (1D2)

310 Maple Park Ave SE

Olympia, WA 98504-7387

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

Board Members Not Present: Matt Hansen, Charlie Howard, and Mike Harbour.

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

Audience: Joan Cullen, Office of General Administration; and Karen Parkhurst, Thurston Regional Planning Council.

Introductions and board business

Brian began by introducing Katy Taylor, Director of the WSDOT Public Transportation Division, who went over some of the outcomes from this year's legislative session and its impacts on WSDOT. She began by thanking the board for its hard work during the session, noting that although the board didn't receive its full funding ask, it still fared remarkably well. The Public Transportation Division has a new budget of \$124 million.

Katy then went over a breakout of most of the budget: \$7 million is for the Vanpool Incentive Program; \$33.4 million for new Regional Mobility Grant programs and a \$24.5 million reappropriation for the existing programs; \$25 million for special needs and paratransit grants; \$17 million for rural mobility grants; \$400 thousand for the Flexible Carpooling pilot program; \$300 thousand for the Whatcom County TDM pilot program; \$200 thousand and one FTE for the Climate Change program; \$130 thousand for the ACCT Special Needs Transportation work group and pilot project.

Katy then noted that the State Agency CTR Program will be moving from GA to WSDOT. She added that CTR is clearly a core priority at WSDOT, and that Secretary Hammond recently reiterated her support of the program, which will now be part of the GMAP process. Katy mentioned that TRPP was not funded, adding that while GTEC was also not funded, the agency's commitment to GTEC is not diminished, and that WSDOT will continue to pursue other funding sources.

Katy then announced that the Urban Corridors Office will no longer be its own region within the framework of WSDOT. Its components will be incorporated into different areas, with the Sound Transit work coming to Public Transportation. Additionally, the TDM mitigation activities on all major projects will continue. Katy added that Public Transportation is becoming a core division within WSDOT.

Bill asked about vanpool funding and whether the board can assist in aiding WSDOT's efforts with regards to transit agencies funneling their vanpool funds into their general funds. Katy replied that it will be brought back to the board if there is a need for the

group to get involved. Bill noted that federal legislation includes “maintenance of effort” requirements language and asked whether any such language appears in the state legislation. Katy replied that it not currently in the legislation, but that it’s something the agency will look to address contractually.

Robin noted that the “add or replace” language in the state budget originally came from the Governor’s office. It was included at the behest of multiple transit agencies that lobbied for more flexibility while struggling to maintain current operating levels. She added that the “maintenance of effort” would’ve been welcomed in the legislative process, and could still come into the WAC process. Bill replied that the board should look to recommend that to WSDOT, adding that one of the strengths of vanpool programs is that they are self-supporting. Brian said the board would like the opportunity to comment, noting that Secretary Hammond has expressed concern about this as well. Robin recommended that we invite representatives from the transit agencies to come talk to the board, so that we get them involved in the WAC process. Katy clarified that it would be a recommendation to the department.

Lynn asked about the Flexible Carpooling pilot. Right now, Keith is the point of contact for this program. There’s a tight timeline for this project, and the RFP process has begun. The report is due the Legislature in December, 2010, so the agency is trying to get the RFP in place as quickly as possible. Brian commented that the agency is also finalizing a draft scope of work to develop TDM targets in corridors, using SR 520 as the basis for this methodology. WSDOT has hired a consultant to help develop these methodologies.

March meeting summary

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

Public comment

Karen Parkhurst talked about the overall state agency CTR Program in the Olympia/Lacey/Tumwater area created by SSB 6088. She commented that it essentially creates a “state agency GTEC” in this region, and is looking forward to bringing information about the program back to the board. Bill asked if there are plans for pursuing funding the Olympia GTEC. Karen replied that City of Olympia staff will be going to the City Council next week to ask for an allocation of the energy block grant funding to keep the program going for at least another year. TRPC is looking at how to support GTEC with additional marketing. Similarly, TRPC is looking at state funding sources—parking fees, facilities charges, etc.—that might be available for the “state agency GTEC”.

GTEC Funding Opportunities

Keith began by noting that, for the local jurisdictions, it’s either an application process or a local decision that’s already been made as to how federal funds should be spent. He went over some of the grant programs and funding options that GTEC jurisdictions can put in for. Keith added that the department is compiling a list of needs which it will then prioritize for a grant application package.

Liz asked about whether local-match funds will be available. Casey replied that among the GTEC jurisdictions he's spoken to, there's a sense that GTEC faces strong competition for the block grants, because there are many other projects waiting for funding. He added that he has stressed to the jurisdictions that they should create a sense of optimism, since there will be other funding options out there.

Casey then cited examples from some of the GTECs that are finding ways to repackage their messaging, such as Olympia, Redmond, and Tacoma, noting that the role partnerships continue to play is critical to sustaining GTEC's success. Aurora and Matt Ransom each talked about the ongoing GTEC efforts in their respective cities. Casey added that he will be presenting on GTEC best practices at next week's WSRO conference in Bellevue.

Peter noted that he was on a recent conference call with the US Department of Energy, and that the competitive grant process will emphasize multijurisdictional collaboration. He then asked if WSDOT has looked into SEP funding sources. Keith replied that, although those funds are on a smaller scale, WSDOT is exploring them as part of its package.

Legislative Update & Implementation

Keith began by going over some of the legislative outcomes. Peter asked for the back story on the Flexible Carpooling program. Keith replied that it was proposed initially as part of TRPP, but there weren't enough funds to move it forward. Brian added that it is WSDOT's responsibility to put together the RFP, using the budget language as a guidepost to develop, test, and implement the program.

Keith then discussed some of the climate change bills that passed. He mentioned a clause in SSB 5560 that phases in fuel economy standards for leased vehicles and its potential impact on vanpool fleets. Keith added that discussions are ongoing with the vanpool operators for best ways to meet the requirements of the statute. Bill cautioned that the only way to meet some of these standards is with smaller vehicles. Liz suggested a credit for larger vehicles capable of carrying more people, thereby reducing more VMT. Bill asked if this can be addressed through a WAC. Keith replied Ecology would likely be the lead agency for a WAC on this law. Brian added that WSDOT has in its best interest to be a part of that process. Ted asked Keith to email the climate bill summary document.

Keith then went over the Governor's recent Executive Order on climate change, which issues a number of directives to WSDOT and Ecology to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and VMT. Brian added that the statute that created the VMT targets asked the department to report back with whether those benchmarks are correct. Peter noted that any changes to the VMT benchmarks might have implications to the board's work and funding over time, and suggested the board receive regular updates.

Joyce asked whether there has been a discussion on establishing rural vs. urban benchmarks for VMT reductions or to break it out by county. Brian replied that he has a meeting scheduled for next week to discuss different measurements for different markets. He added that the Transportation Commission is beginning its Washington Transportation Plan process, and he has asked the Commission to report to the board at a future board meeting as to how they're integrating climate, TDM, and other commuter choice issues in that process.

Another portion of the Executive Order is the directive for WSDOT to work closely with the RTPOs to develop plans that will achieve the VMT and GHG goals in larger counties. Keith has been working with WSDOT's climate change team and planning office, advising them this is a good opportunity to better connect the existing CTR plans to this work.

Kim then talked about the effort that went into securing funding during this particularly difficult session, thanking WSDOT staff, the board, and the Governor's staff for all the hard work that went into it. She noted that even though GTEC was not funded, strides have already been made to sustain it. Kim added that the board can already start to look toward 2011 with a sense of hope. Liz asked that the board be sure to thank legislators. Kim suggested that the board draft something that legislative CTR advocates can use to further the conversation. She added that employers and long time partners deserve thanks and recognition as well.

Robin said that it's a win that the program is still here, adding that CTR and GTEC took a lot of defending, all the way through. She commented that the Governor and legislators alike recognize that good things are coming out of these programs, but that GTEC as a concept just seemed too narrow, too vague, or too esoteric. Robin cautioned that, without a change to the GTEC branding, it will continue to be a tough sell the next time around. CTR, though, is now widely recognized as an umbrella brand. Bill suggested the board focus more on small employers in place of GTEC. Robin replied that the Governor is very interested in small and medium-sized employers.

Robin then talked about climate change legislation, adding that the role the transportation sector played during the session was enormous. She commented that the role is only going to expand, if it hasn't already become the largest role in shaping the climate change discussion and policies. Robin then thanked Brian, who she cited for repeatedly rescuing CTR from the brink of elimination from the budget.

CTR Funding Policy

Keith began by noting that the board's funding policy was adopted in February, adding that the goal today is to review the TAG comments and staff recommendations, as well as adopt the proposed funding allocation. He noted that, with the transportation budget in place, the board now has the opportunity to determine whether the flexibility the budget provides allows for a funding decision that varies from the funding formula.

Staff recommendations regarding the CTR base funding policy and program implementation include maintaining the funding and allocation policies that were adopted by the board; adopting the proposed allocation for 2009-11; exploring additional flexibility in local implementation; directing WSDOT to provide technical assistance and measurement support to the GTECs; and exploring and implementing efficiencies in overall technical assistance and measurement.

Bill commented that this looks like a good start but that he would like to see language pertaining to leverage included, adding that it's always helpful to get as much assistance and have as many options as possible. He then proposed adding a bullet to the staff recommendations that says "maximize funding leverage", or amending one of the existing bullets to include similar language. Liz suggested mandating that GTECs must have leveraged money to be eligible for consideration.

Marilyn questioned whether the majority of the legally mandated worksites are physically located within the GTECs, and expressed concern about the impact of allowing funds to go to affected employers outside the GTECs. Brian replied that one of the drivers behind the efficiency act was creating flexibility for local implementers to identify where they have the most potential for success, adding that the board should spend some time exploring how to help them reach that success.

Bill suggested that the board consider rewarding those local governments who are able to leverage additional funds. Page replied that the funding committee was focused more on tying funding to results as required by a work program, adding that jurisdictions that aren't delivering on their performance goals might have their funding levels affected. Matt Ransom noted that if the jurisdictions were given additional funding and flexibility, it would have to be reasoned, planned, and fully disclosed. Brian added that these decisions will be made based on all factors, will be informed by local circumstance, and won't necessarily punish lack of performance if the effort and commitment are there.

Kathy then went over the TAG comments, noting that the comments were unanimously approved submittal to the board for consideration as it works to adopt the funding allocations. Marilyn asked whether there were substantive differences between the staff recommendations and the TAG comments. Keith replied that TAG comments focus more on support for the base program, while the staff recommendations are geared toward more of the "CTR-umbrella" concept.

Motion: A motion was entertained to adopt the funding allocation, with an amendment to the staff recommendations to include "leverage potential" language. The motion carried.

Action item review

- Keith will email climate change bill summary
- Kathy will compile updates to the work plan and bring the revised version to the next meeting
- Jef will send out details for Redmond meeting next month

Agenda for next meeting

- Work plan discussions
- GTEC location visit decision
- Energy block grants update
- Follow up information on GTEC funding sources
- 520 tolling (and its effect on transit) update
- Legislative initiatives (Flexible carpooling RFP, etc.) update
- Messages for WTP update
- King County vanpool goals discussion

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 1:45 p.m.