

Commute Trip Reduction Board

Meeting Summary
September 25, 2009

Spokane Transit Authority
1230 West Boone Avenue
Spokane, WA 99201

Board Members Present: Brian Lagerberg, Ted Horobiowski, Aurora Crooks, Bill Roach, Marilyn Young Skogland (via teleconference), Peter Hurley, Page Scott, Charlie Howard, Matt Hansen, Lynn Frosch, and Matt Ransom.

Board Members Not Present: Joyce Phillips, Robin Rettew, Mike Harbour, Liz Warman, and Kim Becklund.

WSDOT Staff: Keith Cotton, Kathy Johnston, Casey Kanzler (via teleconference), Christopher Aiken, and Jef Lucero.

Audience: Mayor Mary Verner, City of Spokane; Commissioner Mark Richard, Spokane County; Commissioner Bonnie Mager, Spokane County; Steve Blaska, Spokane Transit Authority (STA); Terri Putney, STA; LeAnn Yamamoto, City of Spokane; Ann Irmer, STA; Ron Kusler, Spokane County; Monica Babine, WSU.

Introductions and board business

Brian introduced Steve Blaska, Operations Manager for STA, who offered opening remarks on behalf of Spokane's transit agency, as well as an overview of STA's transit system. Aurora introduced Spokane County Commissioner Bonnie Mager, who welcomed the Board to Spokane. Kathy then introduced Christopher Aiken, WSDOT's new CTR specialist. Brian announced that the Commute Smart Awards will now be presented next spring. He then announced that Matt Hansen and Kim have been reappointed to the Board by the Governor.

Brian then noted that the WSDOT's Rideshare Manager position has been filled. He added that iCarpool, vendor for the RideshareOnline upgrade, received an international award this week for intelligent transportation systems, in part for the work they are doing for RSO. Brian mentioned that he is now the WSDOT representative on a newly convened panel on statewide energy policy. Recommendations from the panel are due to the Governor's office the first week of November. He then noted that WSDOT recently held a GTEC networking session to discuss program status, funding opportunities, and measurement questions. Legislative staff recently asked for a report—made available at today's meeting—on the GTEC programs and how they are doing without funding.

Brian then offered an update on the progress of the CTR survey process. To date 70 percent of surveyed worksites have received their data. WSDOT continues to work through reporting errors. About 200 surveys remain to be processed. Bill asked whether any organizational issues remain. Brian replied that the transition with OIT has proved difficult, time consuming, and costly, but that process is nearly complete. Keith added that WSDOT has communicated to the jurisdictions that the remaining reports will be finished by the end of the month. Matt asked whether the statewide data will be available in time for inclusion in the legislative report. Keith replied that WSDOT will have no trouble providing that data, adding that the timeline is the same for this year's legislative report as it has been in years past.

August meeting summary

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

Public Comment

None.

Spokane GTEC report

Aurora introduced Ron Kusler, the City's GTEC administrator. Ron began by noting the partnerships created by the city's GTEC program, adding that it has raised awareness of the connections between land use and CTR among the City Council, the Downtown Spokane Partnership, the Chamber of Commerce, and both the City and the County. Ron then introduced Mayor Mary Verner. Mayor Verner began by noting her appreciation for what the GTEC program has done for the Spokane community. The Mayor added that the City's collaborative, integrated efforts at the local level take after those of the greater statewide model. She noted that Spokane has an informal goal of achieving growth and demands on energy through efficiency and conservation.

Mayor Verner has made it a priority to pursue programs and projects that enhance the city's sustainability while keeping the economy vibrant. The Mayor noted that the GTEC program is a proven to be a key initiative as the city works toward achieving those goals. She highlighted economic impact, noting that GTEC is good for business by mitigating the need for more surface parking. The City will also partner with neighborhood (non-downtown) business centers to perform walkability audits. She added that GTEC has been successful in working with local residents and neighborhoods, and has partnered with the Safe Routes to Schools program.

Mayor Verner further cited connectivity and accessibility as benefits of the GTEC program, adding that more citizens can reach their destinations by multimodal thoroughways and special needs transportation. She noted that the City is focused on better pedestrian access in its downtown core, and has asked its legislative representatives that they focus on local transportation funding measures only on non-vehicle access. She closed by noting that the GTEC program expands the city's presence on commute alternatives, raises awareness and visibility, and enhances the city's culture.

Ron then went over the particulars of the Spokane GTEC, noting that a big component of the city's GTEC is its partnership with the university district. The GTEC includes 20 thousand employees, 4,000 residents, 13 affected employers, 20 voluntary employers, and 5,100 CTR participants. In 2005, there were almost 19,000 employees working downtown. By 2030, that number is expected to reach 26,000. The City conducted GTEC baseline, student, and residential surveys to determine the program's performance measurement standards. The City also used several marketing strategies, including utility bill stuffers, door-to-door canvassing, community events, presentations, and incentives. Ron noted that the program established a focus on new users very early in the process.

Ron then talked about some of the partnerships that have evolved thanks to the GTEC. The City has partnered with the Downtown Spokane Partnership, STA, the local universities, Spokane's CTR office and RTPO, Department of Health, the Lands Council, and the local business community have all come together to form a strong network of integrated partners due to their relationships with the GTEC program.

Ron mentioned that the GTEC has already eclipsed its two-year goal of 1,000 new users, which it achieved within ten months. The City has identified barriers through walking audits, and has updated the downtown design and guidance plans and codes to incorporate GTEC goals. Ron noted that the Mayor's sustainability program now includes GTEC program elements. Ron also stressed the importance of including students on the three downtown college campuses in the GTEC. The City also had some notable CTR-related Capital projects, such as bike rack and crosswalk installation. Ron also mentioned that the program provided ten affected employers with bikes to enhance their CTR programs. The bike program garnered media attention and raised Spokane's GTEC visibility.

Ron went over the various sources of Spokane's GTEC funding. The state put up \$150,000; local funding sources totaled \$260,000; and other sources—county and federal, primarily—invested \$100,000. Ron then went over the survey results. Businesses within the GTEC with baseline data reduced their SOV rates by over 12 percent, which exceeded the city's four-year goal in ten months. Three of the largest employers in the GTEC reduced their SOV rates 17-20 percent, and their VMT by 13-19 percent more than what they'd already achieved as affected sites. Ron then cited several examples of Spokane's commitment not only to the GTEC program but to CTR: the Mayor's Sustainability Program, SMART business practices program, the city's CTR program, staff commitment, and grants.

Brian asked what the city is doing to institutionalize the program, and what will drive it and move it forward in the future. Ron replied that a lot of that work is already done, and can be seen in the city's efforts to incorporate GTEC and other CTR components into its plans, codes, and guidelines. He added that as long as the right people have the drive and the passion for this, the program will continue. Aurora added that the future handoff will be seamless, as CTR and GTEC have become ingrained in the culture of Spokane's planning and approach to land use. Bill asked Ron whether he has been able to speak personally with local legislators. Ron replied that he's spoken with Senator Marr, among others.

Matt Hansen commented that the Spokane's GTEC programs are what were in mind when the Efficiency Act was created. He added that the level of familiarity of these programs varies at the local level, but Spokane is a clear example of how CTR programs need to be institutionalized and implemented at the planning level. Page asked about the familiarity with the GTEC name and brand, and whether the name loses people. Ron replied that, internally, the GTEC program concept has become commonly known among city staff, and externally the Commute Smart/Travel Green brand is just as familiar.

Ted commented that GTEC is non-partisan, adding that it has become a matter of common sense in Spokane. He noted that the definition of sustainability is having key people in policy creating positions that understand these concepts. Peter suggested that Mayor Verner's story be incorporated into the Legislative Report. Ted asked whether the Board will hear from the voluntary GTECs. Kathy replied that that WSDOT recently held a GTEC networking session to discuss program status, funding opportunities, and measurement questions, then provided a quick update on the voluntary programs: Puyallup has experienced cultural challenges, Kirkland received CMAQ funds, and Tukwila continues to move its programs forward.

RideshareOnline update

Casey began by going over the RideshareOnline (RSO) timeline updates. The project is still on track for a beta launch at the end of October, with a full roll out in January. WSDOT continues its work to integrate the trip calendar into the new RSO. The cities of Redmond, Spokane, and Vancouver have been added to the stakeholders list. Casey noted that he has heard from King County Metro that there are concerns about how the site will be operated and maintained. WSDOT is addressing those concerns, in part by working with KC Metro on a communications plan, which should be ready very soon. Bill asked about the board of directors for this project and how it will be structured. Casey replied that it would be on a proportional basis, but that the primary stakeholder group will help shape it and move it forward.

Legislative Report Update

Matt Ransom began by noting that there is consensus that the report needs to be much shorter this time around. The front end of the report will be the story telling piece. Matt noted that the goals for today are to determine what's missing, as well as if the outline captures everything. Kathy then went over the major points of the outline. The story will be told up front, with the more technical components included at the end.

Bill asked about the suggestion of using a video. Matt Ransom replied that if a video piece is included, research will have to be done to determine whether the clip would be accessible from government computers. Matt Hansen suggested that the report be modeled closely on some of WSDOT's other folios, which strike a good balance between narrative, data, and graphics. Matt Ransom asked if WSDOT has a communications writer. Keith replied that WSDOT will add two communications staff in the Public Transportation Division, and that he has requested that some staff time be dedicated to producing this report.

Peter commented that he likes the look of the outline, and suggested that support for GTEC from the business community and elected officials be captured and incorporated. He added that conveying how broadly popular this program is will be important to legislators as they prepare to look for areas in which to make cuts. Brian added that it would be useful to identify the types of organizations that should be representing the program.

Matt Hansen noted that CTR is responsive to several significant state policy initiatives, which he dubbed the "Four E's": efficiency, energy, emission reduction, and everybody saves. Matt Ransom suggested either adding or substituting another "E," noting that one thing currently missing from the outline is economic development. Kathy replied that it is included under the benefits, as well as incorporated in the stories.

Matt Ransom—comparing the song sheet against the outline—then asked that the group consider whether there are any important storylines not represented here, and if there are one or two that are the most important that could function as the lead story for the report. Brian suggested that the group go around the table and provide input.

Ted: would like to see this lead with benefits, but suggested calling it "partnership benefits." The four key partners are acknowledged there, and that will play a big part. He noted that the Board is also partners with so many other organizations. He suggested emphasizing green, sustainable programs and partnerships.

Aurora: suggested that the report emphasize the “low cost with high return” angle. She stressed the need to show that the tools are in place to meet the state goals and make them stand up. She added that it would be useful to add that this is infrastructure to manage demand. Aurora also wants to be sure employer stories are highlighted.

Peter: suggested talking about how the program makes significant differences in people’s lives. He noted that people don’t always make decisions based on logic but on appeals to deep seated feelings and emotions. Peter also suggested adding logos of partnering agencies.

Bill: would like the report to lead with benefits, then talk about infrastructure, then leadership.

Matt R.: wants to stress the economic development benefits, especially in today’s environment. He added that, for many employers, this becomes a workforce issue.

Page: prefers that the report play up the benefits, not why it’s nationally recognized, but why it matters. She likes the catch phrases she’s heard in the discussions today, such as “Everybody wins, everybody saves,” “Low cost, high benefit,” “Real results for real people,” and “Driving business decisions to not drive alone.”

Lynn: also would like the report to lead with benefits, but also would stress benefits for employees.

Matt H: suggested that the report lean on the most powerful and compelling piece of the 2007 report, which was the first line chart. That chart demonstrated, among other things, that the results are there and that Washington is ahead of the national average. If the new report combines that with the benefits piece, it equals legitimacy. He suggested it be built on results, but tied directly to benefits.

Charlie: cautioned that we not get too caught up in the storytelling, noting that there are two things this program was set up to do: ease congestion, and improve the environment. He added that those are two fundamental things that not only the people want, but legislators want, too. From there, you can build everything else, from economic development to benefits to employers.

Marilyn: would like emphasis on the economic benefits to communities and businesses.

Matt Ransom asked for ideas for graphic representations to go with Matt Hansen’s suggestion of an updated graphic with the next increment of data from the last report. Matt brought up a potential graphic for linkages to external policies. Peter suggested finding a way to create a congestion relief graphic to reflect the 18 percent reduction. He added that it would be very powerful to demonstrate graphically how 26,000 cars off the road benefits more than just 26,000 people.

Aurora asked if there is any way to graph the survey results. Matt Hansen added that he was concerned about the timing of getting the survey data—if it’s to be included—if only 75 percent of the surveys will have been processed by then. Brian replied that the 75 percent figure is no different from what has been used in the past, so it will be consistent in that regard.

Ted suggested including a public/private contribution graphic, and quantifying how it has changed over time. He also suggested superimposing SOV and VMT data to make conclusions. Keith replied that the employer cost survey hasn't been conducted for several years, which creates a data gap. He added that it is being built into the online reporting process, so it will be available as part of the regular program reporting moving forward.

Matt Ransom then went over the next steps. He would like to come to the board with a well-developed draft completed in the next month. Matt mentioned that he would like to have a teleconference before the next meeting. Kathy added that she will work to incorporate today's comments, first as stand-alone pieces and then pull everything together. Matt said he'd wait to schedule the teleconference until Kathy updates the outline. He added that if the board has more ideas on graphics and message, please email them to him as soon as possible.

Legislative Update

Brian mentioned that he will ask Kim to draft summary pieces of her meeting with Senator Haugen and next steps. Peter then talked about the need to start looking at major frame-up pieces going into 2011, and whether the Board should start introducing and getting out in front on ideas and concepts ahead of time. Bill suggested incorporating some of Brian's energy policy work and seeing how it fits with a longer range vision for the board's messages, and the Board's potential role in that. Peter suggested that the Board consider putting this on the agenda for a future meeting.

Meeting wrap-up

Ted asked if the Board should consider meeting again in November, before the December meeting. Matt Hansen suggested waiting to see how much progress can be made on the report before the next meeting. Keith replied that previous reports have been submitted after December 1, and that the real goal is to get it across the street before the holidays and before the session.

Kathy mentioned that details on the Vancouver trip for next month's meeting will be made available as soon as possible.

Action item review

- RSO stakeholder/board of directors update- to be added to a future meeting agenda
- Legislative Report committee to teleconference before next board meeting
- Kim to draft a summary of the meeting she and Liz had with legislators, as well as changes to the song sheet and any next steps

Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 1:15 p.m.