

SKAGIT COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

Thursday, March 4, 2021
GoToMeeting Remote Meeting

AGENCIES REPRESENTED

- City of Anacortes..... Tim Hohmann
- City of Mount Vernon Bill Bullock
- City of Sedro-Woolley Mark Freiberger
- Samish Indian Nation..... David Strich
- Skagit County Forrest Jones
- Skagit PUD..... Chris Shaff
- Skagit Transit..... Brad Windler
- Town of La Conner Scott Thomas
- Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT)..... John Shambaugh

STAFF PRESENT

- Kevin Murphy Executive Director
- Mark Hamilton..... Senior Transportation Planner
- Katie Bunge..... Associate Planner

OTHERS PRESENT

Two members of the public attended the meeting.

1. Call to Order: 1:31 p.m.

Roll Call: Roll was taken with a quorum present.

2. Approval of February 4, 2021 Technical Advisory Committee (Committee) Meeting Minutes:

Mr. Hohmann moved approval of the February 4, 2021 Technical Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes as presented, and Mr. Bullock seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

3. March Amendment to Regional Transportation Improvement Program: Mr. Hamilton presented one proposed amendment submitted during the March 2021 amendment cycle for the Regional Transportation Improvement Program (RTIP):

- Washington State Department of Transportation
 - SR 20/Deception and Canoe Pass Bridges – Soil Abatement

Mr. Hamilton explained that the RTIP amendment would add the project to the RTIP. The project was identified by WSDOT because of the State Route 20/Deception Pass and Canoe Pass bridges painting work. Funding for the soil abatement project comes from the federal National Highway Performance Program and matching funds.

Mr. Windler moved to recommend the March Regional Transportation Improvement Program amendment as presented, and Mr. Hohmann seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

4. Skagit 2045 Regional Transportation Plan: Mr. Hamilton said that SCOG is required to adopt the Skagit 2045 Regional Transportation Plan (Plan) no later than March 2021 to remain in compliance with federal regulations. The Plan will come before the Transportation Policy Board later this month. A public comment period was held, and ended on February 5. All comments received were included in a public comment tracker, along with staff responses and proposed Plan revisions where applicable. A strikethrough-underline version of the Plan is included in the Committee meeting packet. Revisions to the draft Plan included updating maps and some graphics, narrative revisions and formatting. Changes also include correcting project tables as well as some minor changes to two of the appendices in the Plan.

Mr. Bullock moved to recommend adoption of the Skagit 2045 Regional Transportation Plan to the Transportation Policy Board as presented, and Mr. Jones seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

5. Quarterly Obligation Report: Mr. Hamilton told the Committee that for the 2021 year, SCOG has a regional obligation authority (OA) target of approximately \$1.9 million. Of that target, over \$1 million has already been obligated, since obligations are tracked over the course of the federal fiscal year and Skagit County obligated funds for the Josh Wilson Road Phase 1 project in December 2020. Over \$800,000 remains to be obligated by the end of the federal fiscal year to achieve the regional OA target.
6. 2021 Obligation Authority Plan: Mr. Hamilton presented the 2021 Obligation Authority Plan, which was approved by the Transportation Policy Board at their October 2020 meeting and is revised by SCOG staff as necessary. To date, two agencies have submitted extension requests for projects included in the 2021 OA Plan. There are three other projects in the 2021 OA Plan, in addition to the SCOG Admin 2018–2021 project, and any extension request for these three projects must be submitted to SCOG staff by March 24. Mr. Hamilton noted that Cody Hart had indicated previously to him that the Town of Concrete was likely to submit an extension request for their project.

Project sponsors with projects in the 2021 OA plan gave updates on their projects. Mr. Freiburger stated that although Sedro-Woolley's SR20/SR9N – Township Intersection Improvements project is nearly ready to obligate funding, the city will likely request extensions for both projects in the 2021 OA Plan. Mr. Hamilton noted that this would likely mean that SCOG will employ gap strategies from the RTIP procedures at the April Committee meeting. He encouraged project sponsors to attend next month's Committee meeting and be prepared to commit to moving projects forward to fill any OA gap.

7. 2021 Regional Project Selection Evaluation Process: Mr. Hamilton said that a project selection process is included in SCOG's unified planning work program this year. Funding from the Surface Transportation Block Grant (STBG) and Transportation Alternatives (TA) programs is allocated to SCOG, and SCOG selects projects to receive this funding. Total funding available for this project selection is estimated to be approximately \$3.47 million.

Staff recommends combining funding from the STBG program and TA into one project selection, along with Highway Infrastructure Program (HIP) funds, if there is an HIP allocation available to SCOG this year for project selection. SCOG staff is waiting to find out from WSDOT Local Programs

Division staff if an HIP allocation will be available to SCOG for project selection, and expects to receive more information soon. If project selection is not combined with STBG and TA funding, SCOG would only select TA projects.

Funding is available for Urban areas, Rural areas and any area (Urban or Rural) within the Skagit region. In reviewing existing programmed funds, SCOG staff determined that around \$2.8 million of STBG funds were available for project selection. Of these funds, an estimated minimum of \$790,000 of Rural projects need to be selected. There is no minimum that must be selected for Urban projects. For TA funds, an estimated \$660,000 is available which may go to Urban or Rural projects.

Mr. Hamilton noted that historically, the Transportation Policy Board has chosen to set aside 10% of available STBG funds for non-roadway projects. This may or may not continue, and is at the discretion of the Board. There is no federal nor state requirement to set aside funding in this way – it is a regional decision. The SCOG staff recommendation for the project selection criteria is to increase relative weights for Safety and Maintenance and Preservation. Bonus points are also included for those project sponsors who delivered projects early under the RTIP OA procedures gap strategies #1 and #2. Projects will again be selected for a contingency list during this project selection.

Committee members discussed various aspects of the project selection evaluation process. Committee members supported combining the STBG and TA project selections into one process. For the 10% non-roadway set-aside, some members supported keeping the 10% non-roadway set-aside practice, while some members supported reducing the set-aside amount to 5% of the available STBG funding, and other suggested eliminating entirely since TA funds would also be available in the combined project selection and can fund similar projects as the set aside. Regarding the relative weights for Safety and Maintenance and Preservation, Committee members concurred with the staff recommendation to increase the weights for these two criteria categories from the 2019 project selection.

Committee members discussed the award of bonus points for project sponsors who moved projects forward in 2019 through the RTIP OA procedures gap strategies #1 and #2. Some Committee members said that 10 points was too generous, given how projects scored in the last project selection, and supported reducing the bonus points awarded from 10 points to 5 points. Other members suggested that moving projects forward last year and helping the Skagit region meet the 2020 OA target deserved more weight, and supported awarding 10 bonus points to those project sponsors.

For the contingency list, the Committee recommended that a new contingency list be created in 2021 with the ability for project sponsors to resubmit projects if so desired. The new contingency list could be composed of projects included on the list in 2019, and new projects this year.

A summary of Committee recommendations on this agenda item follows:

- Combined Project Selection – Recommendation to combine Surface Transportation Block Grant and Transportation Alternatives project selection processes into one process. Include Highway Infrastructure Program funds if they become available for project selection.
- Non-Roadway Funding Set Aside – No recommendation on this subject. Committee members supported either doing away with this set aside since TA funds similar projects, or having a 5% or 10% set aside for non-roadway projects.

- Criteria and Weights – Recommendation to provide maximum points for each project as follows:
 - Safety: 25 points
 - Economic Vitality: 15 points
 - Mobility: 15 points
 - Preservation & Maintenance: 15 points
 - Regional Nature: 10 points
 - Project Funding & Readiness: 10 points
 - Technical Advisory Committee Priority: 10 points
 - Bonus Points – No recommendation on this subject. Committee members supported either an additional 5 or 10 points for project sponsors that moved projects forward in 2020 through RTIP OA gap strategies #1 and #2. Organizations eligible for bonus points are Anacortes, Mount Vernon and Samish Indian Nation.
 - Contingency List – Recommendation to create a new contingency list in 2021, with project sponsors able to resubmit projects that were on the 2019 list.
8. Roundtable and Open Topic Discussion: Technical Advisory Committee members gave updates on their current projects. Mr. Murphy noted that local agencies across Washington state were far behind in hitting their portion of the statewide OA target for this federal fiscal year.
9. Next Meeting: April 1, 2021
10. Adjourned: 3:07 p.m.

Attest:

Kevin Murphy
Skagit Council of Governments

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