

SKAGIT COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS TRANSPORTATION POLICY BOARD MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, January 20, 2021
GoToMeeting Remote Meeting

MEMBERS PRESENT

Mayor Julia Johnson, City of Sedro-Woolley, Chair; Mayor Jill Boudreau, City of Mount Vernon; Commissioner Peter Browning, Skagit County (arrived 1:43 p.m.); Jay Drye, Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT); Mayor Laurie Gere, City of Anacortes; Commissioner Ken Goodwin, Port of Anacortes; Mayor Ramon Hayes, Town of La Conner; Commissioner Lisa Janicki, Skagit County; Commissioner Germaine Kornegay, Skagit PUD; Commissioner Steve Omdal, Port of Skagit; Mayor Steve Sexton, City of Burlington; and Commissioner Ron Wesen, Skagit County.

STAFF PRESENT

Kevin Murphy, Executive Director; Katie Bunge, Associate Planner; Pam Carlson, Finance Manager; and Mark Hamilton, Senior Transportation Planner.

OTHERS PRESENT

Cliff Hall, Washington State Department of Transportation; and Dale O'Brien, Skagit Transit.

PUBLIC PRESENT

Two members of the public were in attendance.

MINUTES

1. Call to Order: Mayor Johnson called the meeting to order at 1:32 p.m.
Roll Call: Roll was taken with a quorum present.
2. Chair's Report: Mayor Johnson had nothing to report.
3. Executive Director's Report: Mr. Murphy informed the Board that the Washington state House Transportation Committee has begun the process of putting forward a new transportation package. This new package would cover 16 years of funding, and would mostly focus on maintenance and preservation needs. Mr. Murphy said he will keep the Board updated as the 2021 Washington state legislative session continues.
4. Written Public Comments: Mr. Hamilton explained that while there is no opportunity for verbal public comment during the remote meeting, written comments were accepted between the time when the meeting materials were released, and the day prior to the meeting. During that time, no public comments were received.
5. Consent Agenda
 - a. Approval of December 16, 2020 Transportation Policy Board Meeting Minutes
Mayor Gere moved to approve the December 16, 2020 meeting minutes as presented, and Mayor Boudreau seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.
6. Action Items
 - a. Election of 2021 Vice-Chair: Mayor Sexton moved to nominate Commissioner Browning for

the position of Transportation Policy Board Vice-Chair, and Mayor Boudreau seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

- b. Approval of January Amendments to Regional Transportation Improvement Program: Mr. Hamilton presented two amendments submitted to SCOG through the January amendment cycle for the Regional Transportation Improvement Program (RTIP). Proposed amendments are as follows:
- Skagit County
 - Active Warning Signs (Install Active Warning Signs)
 - Washington State Department of Transportation
 - SR 20/Fish Creek & Lorenzan Creek – Fish Passage

Mr Hamilton said that both the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) and SCOG staff recommend approval of the January RTIP amendments.

Commissioner Wesen moved approval of the January Amendments to the RTIP as presented, and Mayor Boudreau seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

- c. Approval of Human Services Transportation Project Prioritization: Mr. Hamilton stated that every two years, human services transportation projects are assigned regional letter grades by the Board as part of WSDOT’s Consolidated Grant Program process. These letter grades equate to points for each application, which are considered as part of the overall consolidated grant program score for these projects. WSDOT makes the selection decision for projects. The Skagit Special Needs Transportation Committee, an ad hoc committee created by the Board to advise on this process, has provided a recommendation on projects to the Board.

Mr. Hamilton said that during this round of applications, five applications were submitted by Skagit Transit, one was submitted by the Sauk-Suiattle Indian Tribe, and one was submitted by Community Action of Skagit County. Projects were scored by Skagit Special Needs Transportation Committee members, and consolidated scores were presented to the committee by SCOG staff.

Mr. Hamilton noted that some projects are eligible for Federal Transit Administration (FTA) 5310 funding; WSDOT staff has indicated that 5310 funding is underutilized in Urban Small areas, such as Skagit County, and is available for this consolidated grant project selection. Per WSDOT, those projects eligible for 5310 funding are very likely to be funded regardless of their regional letter grade. With this factor being considered, the Skagit Special Needs Transportation Committee decided to recommend a lower priority for projects eligible for 5310 funds (i.e. lower letter grade). All committee members in attendance at the January meeting concurred with the recommendation, including all project sponsors with projects eligible for regional letter grades.

Commissioner Wesen asked if SCOG staff is confident that those projects with a B or C letter grade would be funded if they were eligible for FTA 5310 funds. Mr. Hamilton answered that guidance from the Deputy Director of WSDOT’s Public Transportation Division indicated that it is very likely these projects would be funded regardless of letter grade, but there is no guarantee they will be funded.

Mayor Boudreau moved to approve the Human Services Transportation Project Prioritization as presented, and Mayor Sexton seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously. Mayor Johnson expressed her thanks to Skagit Special Needs Transportation Committee members for their service.

- d. Release of Skagit 2045 Regional Transportation Plan for Public Comment: Mr. Hamilton informed the Board that the draft Skagit 2045 Regional Transportation Plan (Skagit 2045 or Plan) is ready to be released for public review and comment.

Mr. Hamilton outlined some themes from the Skagit 2045 planning process. Population and employment forecasts have been extended out to 2045; these forecasts are consistent with Countywide Planning Policy (CPP) 1, though the horizon year for Skagit 2045 forecasts is further into the future. For Skagit 2045 forecasts, 80% of population growth is allocated to urban growth areas, while 20% is allocated to all other areas. This 80/20 split is consistent with the CPPs.

Mr. Hamilton said that projects in Skagit 2045 are listed as either funded, planned or illustrative. Planned projects can reasonably fit within revenues expected to come into the Skagit region through 2045. Illustrative projects do not fit within the fiscal constraint of the Plan.

Mr. Hamilton noted that the SCOG regional travel demand model is being updated as part of the Skagit 2045 planning process. The highest levels of congestion are displayed along Interstate 5 in the Plan, with increasing congestion in all 2045 scenarios. These scenarios all show similar results due to the lack of large capacity-expansion projects in the Skagit region that would impact congestion for the scenarios. However, there is a project on Interstate 5 through Mount Vernon and Burlington that is expected to ease traffic congestion on the facility through implementation of Intelligent Transportation Systems measures.

For the financial section of the Plan, Mr. Hamilton said that SCOG estimates revenues and expenditures for the region through 2045. In this 2021–2045 timeframe, approximately \$2.8 billion in revenues is anticipated with \$3.7 billion in expenditures for the Skagit region, for a shortfall of around \$900 million. Skagit 2045 includes strategies that can be used statewide and locally to bring in more revenues and address this forecast shortfall.

Mr. Hamilton said that SCOG staff recommends the draft Skagit 2045 Regional Transportation Plan be released for public review and comment. If released, a public comment period will be held from January 22 through February 5, with any timely comments received presented to the Board at the February meeting. The Plan must be adopted by March in order to meet SCOG's five-year federal deadline for plan adoption.

Commissioner Janicki noted that it was difficult to access the appendices, and asked if they would be available on the project website. Mr. Hamilton confirmed that they would be available online through SCOG's website.

Commissioner Janicki said that seismic activity in Alaska had severely impacted state highways, and asked what was being done to seismically retrofit Interstate 5. Commissioner Janicki also inquired how the Skagit region can look for redundancy in north-south travel through the road network, what facilities are most at risk during a seismic event, and if there are priority alternate routes to the interstate.

Mr. Hamilton noted that an analysis had been done in the central Puget Sound region to look specifically at Interstate 5 considering similar questions. Though not a focus of Skagit 2045, SCOG could do in-depth research in the future to address this issue. SCOG staff is anticipating amending the Skagit 2045 Regional Transportation Plan at some point in the next year, and this type of work could be included as an appendix at that time.

Mr. Drye noted that WSDOT does conduct routine seismic retrofits, which are part of the maintenance and preservation program, and that much of Interstate 5 in the Skagit region has

already been retrofitted. Commissioner Janicki noted that it would be helpful to see an analysis indicating where facilities had not yet been retrofitted. Mr. Drye suggested that WSDOT bridge-preservation staff could share that information with the Board at a future meeting.

Mr. Murphy noted that seismic retrofit estimates are embedded in programmatic maintenance and preservation need amounts provided by WSDOT for Skagit 2045. Generally, there is a large shortfall in this category, in the hundreds of millions of dollars.

Mayor Boudreau moved to release the Skagit 2045 Regional Transportation Plan for public comment as presented, and Commissioner Janicki seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

7. Discussion Items

- a. 2021 Regional Highway Safety Performance Targets: Mr. Hamilton reminded the Board that each year, safety targets come before them as a SCOG metropolitan planning organization responsibility. Each year, the Transportation Policy Board may either set quantifiable targets related to the federal performance measures, or choose to plan and program projects to help Washington state meet targets for each performance measure. Targets are set as five year rolling averages by WSDOT. In general, the trend line for statewide and regional targets shows numbers going in the wrong direction, indicating that total numbers and rates of fatalities and serious injuries are increasing. Washington statewide targets set goals of zero fatalities and zero serious injuries by 2030.

Mr. Hamilton explained that the 2021 Regional Highway Safety Performance Targets will go to the Technical Advisory Committee in February for a recommendation to the Board.

- 8. Roundtable and Open Topic Discussion: Mr. Drye notified the Board that a map of scheduled WSDOT construction projects is included with the meeting materials. For the 2021 summer season, four fish-passage projects are scheduled for construction.
- 9. Next Meeting: The next meeting is Wednesday, February 17, 2021, at 1:30 p.m., via the GoToMeeting remote meeting platform.
- 10. Adjourned: Mayor Johnson adjourned the meeting at 2:40 p.m.

Information Items: The Board was provided with draft minutes from the January 7, 2021 Technical Advisory Committee meeting, a map of 2021 construction projects for the WSDOT Mount Baker Area, and a monthly financial update.

Approved,

Date: _____

Kevin Murphy, Executive Director
Skagit Council of Governments

Date: _____

Mayor Julia Johnson, Sedro-Woolley
Transportation Policy Board Chair
Skagit Council of Governments