

SKAGIT COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS TRANSPORTATION POLICY BOARD MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, February 17, 2021
GoToMeeting Remote Meeting

MEMBERS PRESENT

Mayor Julia Johnson, City of Sedro-Woolley, Chair; Commissioner Peter Browning, Skagit County, Vice-Chair; Mayor Jill Boudreau, City of Mount Vernon; Jay Drye, Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT); Mayor Laurie Gere, City of Anacortes; Representative Greg Gilday, 10th Legislative District, Washington State House of Representatives; Commissioner Ken Goodwin, Port of Anacortes; Mayor Ramon Hayes, Town of La Conner; Commissioner Lisa Janicki, Skagit County; Commissioner Germaine Kornegay, Skagit PUD (arrived 2:02 p.m.); Mayor Jason Miller, Town of Concrete; Commissioner Steve Omdal, Port of Skagit; Mayor Steve Sexton, City of Burlington (arrived 1:57 p.m.); Commissioner Ron Wesen, Skagit County; and Chairman Tom Wooten, Samish Indian Nation (arrived 1:53 p.m.).

STAFF PRESENT

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

OTHERS PRESENT

Chris Damitio, Washington State Department of Transportation.

PUBLIC PRESENT

One member of the public was in attendance.

MINUTES

1. Call to Order: Mayor Johnson called the meeting to order at 1:30 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 there is an information item included in the meeting packet relating to SCOG's 2021 regional project selection process. SCOG staff continues to monitor transportation bills currently in the Washington state legislature.
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, one public comment was received from Joe Kuntzler in relation to the Skagit 2045 Regional Transportation Plan (Plan).

Mr. Kuntzler expressed his disappointment in the short duration of the public comment period for the Plan, and requested an additional 30 days be added to the public comment period. Mr. Kuntzler noted that transit projects in the draft Plan appeared to be low priorities and disagreed with the use of trips as a metric for planning decisions. He noted that transit service is underfunded, and low frequency service is not desirable to most people – constraining how trips can be made throughout the region. Finally, Mr. Kuntzler reiterated his support of transit projects including the Skagit Transit

Maintenance, Operations, and Administration facility construction, and mentioned that transit should be considered a higher priority within the region.

Mr. Hamilton said that staff responses to these comments would be provided during the Skagit 2045 Regional Transportation Plan Public Comments agenda item.

5. Consent Agenda

a. Approval of January 20, 2021 Transportation Policy Board Meeting Minutes

Mayor Boudreau moved to approve the January 20, 2021 meeting minutes as presented, and Commissioner Wesen seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

6. Action Items

a. February Amendment to Regional Transportation Improvement Program: Mr. Hamilton presented one proposed amendment submitted to SCOG through the February amendment cycle for the Regional Transportation Improvement Program (RTIP). The proposed amendment is as follows:

- Skagit County
 - Guemes Ferry Terminal (Girder Replacement)

Mr. Hamilton explained that this amendment would add the project back to the RTIP. Construction funding for the project did not completely obligate in 2020, and the project needs to be reprogrammed in order to authorize the full amount of federal Ferry Boat Program funding for the project.

Mayor Gere moved approval of the February Amendment to the RTIP as presented, and Mayor Boudreau seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

b. Approval of Resolution 2021-02 to Set Highway Safety Targets: Mr. Hamilton reminded the Board that this agenda item before them last month for discussion. SCOG has two options to set regional highway safety targets each year in its role as a federally designated metropolitan planning organization: (1) the Board may either agree to plan and program projects to help meet statewide targets; or (2) the Board may set separate quantifiable targets for the Skagit region. Last year, the Board continued the practice of agreeing to plan and program projects to help meet the statewide targets. The staff recommendation, along with the recommendation of the Technical Advisory Committee, is to continue to agree to plan and program projects to help meet the statewide targets.

Mayor Boudreau moved to approve Resolution 2021-02 to set regional highway safety targets as presented, and Commissioner Browning seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

c. Approval of Unified Planning Work Program Amendment: Mr. Hamilton pointed out that the unified planning work program (UPWP) includes SCOG's transportation activities and follows the state fiscal year. SCOG was recently notified that there may be additional state funding available to supplement these transportation activities. Amending the UPWP would allow SCOG to utilize available funds to print the Skagit County Walking Trail Guide, an activity currently included in the UPWP which is typically funded through charitable donations. The amendment to the UPWP would change Task 2.7 to reflect that the guide would be completed by June 2021, and change the financial tables of the UPWP to reflect the additional anticipated revenues and expenditures. Both SCOG staff and the Technical Advisory Committee recommend approval of the UPWP amendment.

Commissioner Browning moved approval of the Unified Planning Work Program Amendment as presented, and Commissioner Janicki seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

7. Discussion Items

- a. Skagit 2045 Regional Transportation Plan Public Comments: Mr. Hamilton reminded the Board that they released the draft Skagit 2045 Regional Transportation Plan for public review and comment at their January meeting. The public comment period spanned two weeks, from January 22 through February 5. March 2021 is the deadline to adopt the Plan to maintain federal compliance. A State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) review was conducted as part of the planning process, which resulted in a Determination of Non-Significance (DNS). SCOG staff will review comments, provide staff responses and propose revisions based on comments received for inclusion in the final draft of the Plan.

SCOG also received comments after the public comment period ended. Mr. Hamilton responded to the public comments received, noting that in retrospect, a longer public comment period may be warranted in the future to gather input, but SCOG does need to adopt the Plan by March 2021 in order to meet its federal deadline. Extending the public comment period is not feasible for this plan update.

In regards to projects in the draft Plan, there was an error in displaying projects due to a database error. The error has since been corrected, and the Skagit Transit projects Mr. Kunzler noted in comments for this meeting are actually considered high priorities in the Plan, not low priorities.

Mr. Hamilton noted that revisions to the Plan will be included in a final version next month.

- b. WSDOT Mount Baker Area 2021 Construction Projects: Mr. Damitio presented on construction projects anticipated for the WSDOT Mount Baker Area this summer. In general, revenues are down for WSDOT, and this has impacted the agency's ability to deliver preservation projects. Major priorities for the Mount Baker Area include removing fish passage barriers, as well as bridge preservation projects. There are around 80 total culverts in the Skagit region that are a part of the federal injunction to remove these barriers to fish passage. Approximately 50 of the barriers must be corrected by 2030.

In addition to fish-passage projects, other projects for the Mount Baker Area include continuing the State Route 20/Deception Pass & Canoe Pass Bridge Painting project, as well as painting the Stillaguamish Bridge on Interstate 5. In 2022, there is an anticipated bridge deck replacement for the Interstate 5 Samish River Bridge, and three additional fish-passage projects.

Commissioner Janicki inquired about work to reduce closures on State Route 20, in light of a recent landslide east of Concrete. Mr. Drye noted that at that site, geotechnical engineers determined that the slide that happened was a superficial slide. Mayor Miller noted that with regards to State Route 20, the area where the slide occurred has been a well known problem area for Concrete residents for decades. Mr. Drye responded that in general, it is not that WSDOT does not expect slides to occur in the future, but rather that the predicted severity of landslides impacts which areas are prioritized. Commissioner Goodwin asked if there was any additional funding besides state funding for landslide mitigation projects. Mr. Drye responded that there is a small amount of federal funding, but funding for the most part comes from Washington state.

Mayor Boudreau stated that she was looking forward to hearing about WSDOT's bridge program, particularly with regards to the State Route 536 bridge across the Skagit River.

8. Roundtable and Open Topic Discussion: Mr. Drye notified the Board that the Cascade Loop has been designated as a National Scenic Byway following an effort that had been underway for many years. Commissioner Browning noted that this designation would be helpful for tourism in the area.
9. Next Meeting: The next meeting is Wednesday, March 17, 2021, at 1:30 p.m., via the GoToMeeting remote meeting platform.
10. Adjourned: Mayor Johnson adjourned the meeting at 2:17 p.m.

Information Items: The Board was provided with draft minutes from the February 4, 2021 Technical Advisory Committee meeting and an update on the 2021 regional project selection process.

Approved,

Kevin Murphy, Executive Director
Skagit Council of Governments

Date: _____

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

Date: _____

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