

Whatcom Council Of Governments

SFY 09 Unified Planning Work Program Annual Narrative and Financial Report

This annual report details work completed between July 1, 2008 and June 30, 2009 in meeting Federal Highway Administration, Federal Transit Administration and Washington State Department of Transportation planning requirements as set forth in United States Code of Federal Regulations and the Revised Code of Washington under **Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU)** and the Washington State Growth Management Act.

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OVERVIEW

The Whatcom Council of Governments (WCOG) is the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the Whatcom County Metropolitan Planning Area and the Regional Transportation Planning Organization (RTPO) for the region comprised of the entirety of Whatcom County.

This report provides a narrative summary of the work completed by the Whatcom Council of Governments (WCOG), under agreements with FHWA, FTA, WSDOT, and other entities, during the entire 2009 State Fiscal Year. Transportation planning work completed by WCOG was authorized and funded by FHWA, FTA and WSDOT for SFY 2009, and organized in the 2008/2009 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP). Goals identified in the 2008/2009 UPWP are listed below along with a narrative description of how each goal was met during SFY 2009. Individual work tasks are organized in the same manner.

Budgeted and expended amounts for each funding program for the 2009 fiscal year are reflected in **TABLE A**.

The 2009 UPWP was amended once during the fiscal year. The amendment added an Economic Analysis, Business Plan and Strategic Funding Plan package for a proposed Bellingham passenger-only ferry service to the San Juan Islands. The ports of Friday Harbor and Bellingham participated in the process and funding. Total project cost was \$25,000. The second amendment included the Whatcom Smart Trips project which is a successful, on-going, community-wide vehicle trip reduction program that includes educational, incentive and assistance components.

The figures in **TABLE A** have incorporated these amendments.

GOALS

The following categorized goals are those identified in the WCOG SFY '08-'09 UPWP. The information in the box below each goal describes the work done toward achieving that goal during the State Fiscal Year.

The Federal Highway and Federal Transit Administrations (FHWA and FTA) did not issue formal guidance in the form of Primary Emphasis Areas for SFY 2008 or 2009. Previous primary emphasis areas were rescinded. Alternatively, those federal agencies have suggested a focus on compliance with the planning requirements of SAFETEA-LU.

WSDOT emphasis areas for FY 2009 included two points of reference, the RTPO requirements and guidance imposed by RCW 47.80 and the need to continue working toward harmony and consistency between Regional Transportation Plans and Washington Transportation Plans. Work included in this latter category may consist of



providing data and information, reviewing plan materials, participating in meetings, coordinating with cities, county, ports and other agencies on providing modal information and priorities, hosting public forums and developing performance measures. Providing assistance and technical support for corridor studies.

The themes, schedules and programs identified in the Washington Transportation Plan were reflected in preliminary work to begin updating the Whatcom Transportation Plan. Emphasis in those identified areas was applied in work toward accomplishing goals as shown below.

Additionally, WCOG has continued its efforts in assisting local jurisdictions with implementation of Washington State Growth Management Act requirements, and forecasting regional travel demand.

The following goals, appearing as bullets and organized categorically, along with the actions taken by WCOG over the preceding State Fiscal Year in shaded text, identify the ways in which WCOG worked over the last year to comply with Federal SAFETEA-LU requirements as well as State DOT emphasis areas.

Transportation Demand Modeling

- Continue refinement and use of the Whatcom Bi-national and Regional transportation demand model to forecast future transportation demand in the region

WCOG's Senior Transportation Planner continued to refine WCOG's regional model by contracting for professional services needed to conduct a household travel survey allowing use of real data as opposed to the proxy data used in the previous model version. The model was and will continue to be used by Whatcom County for GMA purposes.

- Assist Whatcom County, its cities, WSDOT and other interested parties including consultants in use of the WCOG transportation demand model.

The WCOG Regional model was used by Whatcom County, WSDOT and consultants working for both agencies. WCOG staff worked with Caliper Corp. to switch the operating platform to TransCAD. WCOG staff worked through TTAC members to ensure a high level of correlation between the WCOG model and the needs of the County and its cities.

- Use the model to forecast future regional and cross-border demand for commercial operations and provide forecast results with federal, regional, State, local and other interested parties.

The WCOG bi-national model was updated with new information regarding commercial border operations data gathered through a combined WCOG/WWU-BPRI effort.

- Continue enhancement of the technical capacity of MPO/RTPO staff through formal and informal training and education.

WCOG staff attended technical and administrative training on the following topics: Modeling, Human Resources, Financial and Planning at Transportation Research Board and other topically dedicated conferences. A modeling peer exchange was also conducted with Victoria, British Columbia Capital District staff.

Freight Mobility

- Support WSDOT Freight Strategy and Policy office efforts to increase focus on freight transportation demand and operations.

WCOG staff led CTAG and TTAC discussions concerning regional and statewide aspects of freight mobility, worked with the WSDOT Freight Policy Office (FPO) staff in discussions on regional freight issues and provided analyses of cross-border freight flows and commercial vehicle trips to FPO staff.

- Develop, in partnership with WSDOT and system users, a Freight Mobility round table or working group as a forum for a dialogue on freight issues and system needs and changes.

The International Mobility and Trade Corridor project (IMTC) identifies projects intended to support a better, more reliable, freight system. Specifically, Commercial operators were contacted and data gathered regarding travel patterns and potential use of the Free And Secure Trade (FAST) program. Discussions were held with border community officials concerning the IMTC Circulation Plan project and freight flow options for the Sumas – Abbotsford port of entry.

- Encourage multi-modal freight transportation planning.

WCOG staff encouraged local jurisdictions and citizens to consider freight movement and connections in their overall transportation considerations and planning.

- Coordinate and facilitate local, State and Federal entities in placing emphasis on freight mobility-related system improvements including implementation of Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) technologies.

WCOG staff continued to recommend ITS implementation to local, federal and State transportation entities as part of their overall improvement programs.



- Monitor and report on U.S. – Canada commercial trip trends and assess future demand.

The WCOG-led IMTC stakeholder group completed and participated in multiple efforts in these areas including preconstruction project funding, research and data-gathering efforts.

- Complete the 2009-2014 Regional and Metropolitan Transportation Improvement Programs (TIP) to accurately reflect the region's project priorities and funding sources.

The Whatcom Transportation Policy Board adopted the 2009 Metropolitan and Regional TIP prepared in cooperation with local jurisdictions and WSDOT.

- Develop information and data, for use by MPO/RTPO members and others, to ensure regional freight mobility is considered in investment-based decision-making

Through participation in the IMTC forum, a Community Transportation Advisory Group (CTAG) and participation in Transportation Research Board activities, WCOG has had an active role in advocating, seeking and generating freight mobility related data.

- Refine the WCOG travel demand model to more accurately portray and forecast freight movement demand at the Whatcom County portion of the Washington – BC border.

By working with IMTC partners, WCOG staff has participated significantly in developing phase one of a Border Circulation Plan with funding from Canadian partners.

Management and Operations

- Help fund and develop a border operations model as a component of the Whatcom transportation demand model to forecast need for capital improvement programs.

WCOG staff, in cooperation with bi-national partners has developed the first phase of a Border Circulation Plan.

- Expand the concepts being used in the current Traveler Information Kiosk project to provide information to the traveling public about transportation options and alternatives.

The kiosk project has been sustained by updating the Transportation Connections map information and data. This was accomplished over the year due to changes in providers and system operations. Maps and data have been printed, laminated and distributed to kiosk locations along with updated “take-away” maps and delivered to kiosk location managers for subsequent distribution to the public. Information made available thusly creates a more informed, and therefore efficient traveling public.

WCOG staff members have and will continue to meet with border and regional stakeholders including CBP, CBSA and trucking associations to improve border-crossing and County thru-put efficiency for people and goods.

- Encourage Whatcom Transportation Authority to enhance rider-ship through operational and system management improvements such as provision of cross-border transit services in cooperation with British Columbia, Canada operators.

WCOG continued to encourage Whatcom Transportation Authority (WTA) (Transit) to review ways in which cross-border transit connections might be made. Many factors, including regulatory continue to impeditment and frustrate these efforts.

Security and Safety including Facility Safety in the Transportation Planning Process

- Through the International Mobility and Trade Corridor project, consult with agencies responsible for physical security at ports of entry such as airports, seaports and border crossings to help identify ways to ensure safe and secure public travel.

WCOG has, by forming partnerships with regional and federal partners, identified and implemented ITS technology in the region. This has been done by encouraging system users to take advantage of existing technology as well as identifying and promoting newer ITS technologies.

- Help implement safety and security improvements in the region by seeking funding from federal, state and other programs intended to support transportation safety and security.

While coordination efforts have been expended in this area, funding for implementation of this type of project has not been forthcoming. Such efforts will continue.

- Build safety and security into all MPO/RTPO transportation-planning activities by continuing to ensure these considerations are reflected in regional project selection criteria.

Activities at both Technical Advisory Committee and Policy Board Meetings have included safety and security considerations as part of planning and project prioritization.

- Plan for emergency vehicle access as an integral part of all, long range, MPO/RTPO plans.

WCOG staff has encouraged consideration of integrating emergency vehicle access as part of local planning processes. The WCOG Whatcom Transportation Plan, a metropolitan and regional document does include references to these principles. Local codes, in some cases however, limit impervious surfaces in the interest of reducing environmental impacts as well as seeking more pedestrian friendly, human-scale streetscapes.

Intelligent Transportation Systems

- Revise and update the Whatcom region's adopted ITS architecture to improve its use as a guide in implementing ITS projects and programs in the region.

The Whatcom region ITS architecture has been used to guide ITS project and program implementation in the region. Architecture updates were considered, but were neither required nor implemented over the last year.

- Advocate use of Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) and other technologies in conjunction with, and where practical, in lieu of new road construction through implementation of the principles identified in the ITS architecture. Incorporate ITS strategies in long and short range planning efforts.

By continuing and expanding partnerships with regional and national partners, WCOG has, encouraged implementation of ITS technology in the region.

- Continue working with officials of local jurisdictions to encourage ITS technologies in plans and projects by adding ITS policies to the transportation chapters of their GMA Comprehensive Plans.

Ongoing discussions continue to emphasize value and efficiency gains achieved by use of these technologies.

- Encourage Whatcom Transportation Authority (WTA) to use ITS technologies to integrate safety and security into public transit operations.

WCOG staff recommended and supported FTA ARRA funding for increased use of ITS technologies for WTA projects including operational, safety and security-specific work as part of park and ride projects and on transit coaches.



- Cooperate and collaborate with partner agencies; including cities, County, and state; on projects relating to Interstate 5, by encouraging integration and implementation of ITS technologies in the interest of overall system efficiency, safety and security.

By participating in committees and work groups, WCOG staff have strongly encouraged and provided guidance on including ITS technologies as transportation construction projects are implemented.

Transportation Project Funding

- Continue long-range financial planning, including assessment of existing conditions, identification of future needs, and assessment of fiscal ability to meet future needs. Search for and identify new and innovative resources, actively seek and react quickly to any new, diverted, or innovative funding sources as an agent, representative, or project lead for projects beneficial to the region.

WCOG has identified imperatives and funding sources for long- and short-range regional and border-related transportation projects. Additionally, WCOG has identified city, County and WSDOT projects of regional significance for which funds have been, and continue to be, sought. Some less traditional sources added to planning capabilities.

- Increase project completion in Whatcom County by working with WSDOT staff and officials to cooperate on funding projects on both local and State facilities.

WCOG, in working with WSDOT headquarters and regional staff, strongly encouraged timely completion of significant projects on State Routes 543, 544, and I-5; and on local projects eligible for ARRA funds.

- Provide sustained leadership and administration of International Mobility and Trade Corridor (IMTC) project to identify and fund border-related projects that increase cross-border mobility, security and safety

Partnerships with local, State, Provincial and national IMTC members, has enabled WCOG to identify long- and short-range border-related transportation needs and potential funding sources for many of those projects

- Advise and assist MPO and RTPO members in seeking non-traditional resources to complete needed transportation projects.

WCOG has worked with its local members to seek funding for their projects from programs, grants and other non-traditional sources.



- Assist Whatcom County and its cities, as well as other entities, in seeking funding for projects that contribute to transportation safety, efficiency and modal choices for system users.

WCOG has identified and helped to obtain funds for these projects including trails, safe routes to schools, and bicycle education programs. WCOG has also been a recipient of funds for these purposes, such as Whatcom Smart Trips.

- Ensure the regions TIP projects meet SAFETEA-LU Final Rule requirements.

WCOG works with Whatcom County governments to ensure compliance with TIP-related rules and regulations.

Public Participation in Transportation Planning

- Update WCOG Public Participation Plan to expand efforts and methods for involving the public and in meaningful and informed participation in processes used to identify all transportation-related needs, issues, and solutions. Include consultation with elected officials of non-Metropolitan planning areas.

WCOG continues to provide staff support and leadership for the Community Transportation Advisory Group (CTAG), which contributes substantially to regional transportation planning efforts of the MPO, RTPO as well as to the State Transportation Plan update process. An update of the WCOG Public Participation Plan was commenced this reporting year. CTAG was consulted to improve community relations methodologies.

- Provide on-going leadership and administration for the Community Transportation Advisory Group (CTAG), a geographically representative group of citizens with widely varied interests, whose community-envisioned charter is to provide a broad base of community perspectives for transportation planning and project implementation. CTAG will continue working with other citizens and advising the Whatcom Transportation Authority and the Whatcom Transportation Policy Board.

WCOG staff has continued to support and lead the Community Transportation Advisory Group (CTAG). Over the last year, a new, exciting, publically informative web site, Transportation Town, was improved to include more information and greater access. Transportation Town won a first place award from the Transportation Research Board for innovative public communication techniques.



- Using Transportation Demand Management programs and tools such as Commute Trip Reduction, the Whatcom SmartTrips program and other methodologies, broaden public roles and information access in determining the future look of the Whatcom transportation system.

Through Smart Trip programs, WCOG staff has enlisted participation of very nearly 10,000 participants that have saved over 19 million drive-alone miles in favor of reduced congestion, green house gas and vehicle miles traveled.

Non-Motorized and Public Transportation

- Partner with local agencies and other organizations in working toward safer routes to schools, offering multiple opportunities for bicycle safety education, and human services transportation.

WCOG staff has accepted responsibility for administration of the five-county "Farmhouse Gang" coalition which has as its mission, better non-motorized and public transportation access. As a result of last year's activities and in cooperation with WTA staff and other members of the five-county coalition, the newly established inter-county transit connections service was promoted. Additionally, 2009 saw implementation of the Whatcom Smart Trips suite of programs achieve high marks by providing bicycling education for approximately 14,500 adults and 2,500 children. WCOG has also participated in the WSDOT-directed Human Services Grant program in updating its human services access program: Employment Access and Coordinated Human Services Transportation (EACH). WCOG has also reprinted its Transportation Connections map for distribution from previously positioned Traveler Information Kiosks.

- Complete current Coast Millennium Trail (CMT) projects during 2008, and work with Whatcom and adjacent Counties and cities in planning for subsequent phases.

WCOG staff has ensured obligation of all funds associated with the CMT project.

- Recommend, encourage and work with adjacent jurisdictions toward transit-, pedestrian- and bicycle-friendly improvements both as stand alone projects and as components of road-related transportation improvements associated with regional development patterns.

WCOG staff continued coordination with County and city staff in working toward more complete bicycle and pedestrian trails systems.



- Continue work with the County and its cities in encouraging a regional system approach to transportation and recreational trails as a means to attract tourism and provide local transportation options.

WCOG continues involvement in substantial work toward non-motorized access including participation in Parks Department efforts to provide non-auto transportation. Examples include Bay - to - Baker Trail, work with Whatcom Parks Foundation, and bicycle education programs.

- In working with Whatcom Transportation Authority, continue emphasis on connections with other modes and with other transit providers.

WCOG staff completed local bicycle education programs (Bike Rodeo, Bike Month, Bike to Work and School Day and young rider education programs). WTA is also a strong partner in the Smart Trips program operated by WCOG staff.

- Coordinate non-emergency human service transportation by working with existing human services organizations such as Northwest Regional Council, Whatcom Transportation Authority, Whatcom Department of Health, DSHS and others to identify gaps in access to transit and seek means of closing those gaps. Implement the region's adopted Human Services Plan (EACH).

WCOG has continued work to find resources for implementing the priorities set out in the EACH plan.

Coordination with Others

- Participate whenever and wherever possible and work with State staff to promote consistency among the Whatcom Transportation Plan; Washington Transportation Plan; Regional, County and Bellingham Commute Trip Reduction Plans and the Human Services Plan to ensure a comprehensive approach in contribution to meeting statewide transportation needs.

WCOG staff worked closely with WSDOT staff and local jurisdictions in striving for consistency among State, Regional and local transportation goals as set forth in respective Transportation Plans. This work included substantial participation in local GMA Comprehensive Plan work, especially on Urban Growth Areas.



- Consult with local officials through the Whatcom MPO/RTPO Transportation Policy Board and Transportation Technical Advisory Committee, as well as through direct contact with elected and appointed officials such as city and County Council members, Planning Directors, Operations Managers, Public Works Directors and their staff of non-MPO cities, and other entities.

Local elected officials are among the Whatcom Transportation Policy Board (WTPB). Frequent meetings of the WTPB offered substantial opportunities for such consultations over the last year. CTAG membership includes Planning Directors to provide technical oversight for the group. The WCOG Planning Director participated extensively as a member of a County -wide Growth Management Technical Advisory Group

- Review County and city GMA Comprehensive Plan Transportation Elements for consistency with the Whatcom Transportation Plan (WTP), and biennially review the WTP for currency. If updates are required for regional aspects of the plan, the revised WTP will be forwarded to WSDOT.

The Whatcom region's jurisdictions' Comprehensive Plan transportation elements have been revised over the last year . Consistency review will be completed in SFY '09.

- Maintain and enhance communication, cooperation and coordination between WCOG and WSDOT, FTA, FHWA, WTA and other entities as directed by the Whatcom Transportation Policy Board.

Relationships between WCOG MPO/RTPO staff and WSDOT regional representatives have been strengthened over the last year. WCOG has worked particularly closely with WTA over the last 12 months. FTA and FHWA relationships and communication continue to be strong.

- Work with Whatcom County and Bellingham staff in meeting CTR Efficiency Act planning requirements.

WCOG worked over the last year to help ensure Whatcom County and the City of Bellingham CTR Plans and supportive ordinances were completed and adopted.

- Continue leading the International Mobility and Trade Corridor project (IMTC). Plan and continuously develop a coordinated, all weather, multi-modal, transportation infrastructure with integrated Intelligent Transportation System technologies, based on the Whatcom Regional Architecture and priorities identified by the IMTC coalition. The border system conjoins Washington State and British Columbia through the



Cascade Gateway, and provides effective and multi-modal access and mobility for people and goods by reducing travel delay while maintaining safety and security.

Under WCOG leadership, IMTC operated effectively over the last year initiating new projects, continuing others and finishing some.

- Track major transportation projects that are being implemented from the region's 2006 and 2007 Transportation Improvement Programs (TIP).

WCOG does continually track the major projects including Federal funding and those of regional significance.

- Provide timely assistance to MPO/RTPO members including WSDOT with any updates or revisions of functional or other classification of Whatcom County's road system.

WCOG has assisted and supported Whatcom County, Bellingham, Everson, Blaine, Ferndale and Sumas in applying for Federal Highway Functional Classification requests and amendments.



WORK ELEMENTS

The SFY 2008 WCOG UPWP is divided into seven Program Work Elements:

- 1) **Administration**
- 2) **Planning Documentation**
- 3) **MPO and RTPO Program Management**
- 4) **Transportation Modeling, Data Collection, and Technical Assistance**
- 5) **Multi-Modal and Public Transportation Planning**
- 6) **Other**
- 7) **Un-funded work**

Each work element is addressed separately in this annual report. The description of specific work accomplished during the year is preceded by a statement of purpose for each element, and followed by a list of work products resulting from the year's accomplishments.

Element I. Administration

Administration includes the record keeping, training, and the business of WCOG for activities relating to transportation planning.

WCOG staff provided administrative support to manage and coordinate the SFY 2009 Unified Planning Work Program. Associated administrative actions included creation of public participation opportunities, budget review, office administration, grant administration, dissemination of records and documents to the public and to member and non-member jurisdictions and facilitation of State and federal audit procedures. Appropriate federal and state financial records were kept, organized and externally audited. All the above were accomplished within the guidelines and requirements of FHWA Title VI.

WCOG staff coordinated, facilitated, attended and summarized monthly, quarterly and annual meetings of the WCOG Executive Board, Whatcom Transportation Policy Board, the WCOG Full Council, the Community Transportation Advisory Group, the "Farmhouse Gang" and the Transportation Technical Advisory Committee (TTAC); and attended WSDOT/MPO/RTPO Coordinating Committee meetings.

WCOG staff members also participated in transportation-related meetings and events hosted by other agencies and organizations including various divisions of WSDOT, WTA, multi-county, multi-state, and international groups focused on transportation as well as the Bellingham-Whatcom Chamber of Commerce, Convention and Visitors Bureau, and attended multiple state and federal legislative briefings and other activities.

WCOG continued in a leadership role administering the International Mobility and Trade Corridor (IMTC) project to facilitate cooperation and joint planning among U.S. and Canadian border related transportation interests. The Project Manager led and the Deputy Director attended monthly meetings of the US - Canadian border stakeholder's group: IMTC. WCOG IMTC staff members also completed a series of stakeholder interviews. Several IMTC projects were



completed, including at-border commercial vehicle surveys. Others were started, and others formulated.

The WCOG Smart Trips program was administered by dedicated WCOG staff. Meetings were held with Commute Trip Reduction employer staff and the overall program was managed according to pertinent regulations.

The Office Manager and Clerk of the Board prepared monthly and quarterly Executive Board and Whatcom Transportation Policy Board agendas and meeting summaries, as well as two annual Full Council meetings, and attended Human Resources training. The Senior Transportation Planner attended transportation planning and modeling workshops, and assisted with TTAC and CTAG meetings. The Finance Manager completed CGFM classes. The Deputy Director maintained AICP certification.

Administration Work Products:

- Annual budget and necessary amendments
- Grant management and reporting
- Satisfactory results from State audit
- Payroll and associated documentation
- Appropriate files and records accurately portraying staff work on transportation activities for the current year
- Appropriate files and records relating to sub-contractors and others providing professional services for WCOG sponsored or managed projects
- Communication with the public, elected officials, and staff of other organizations
- Staff reports, agendas and summaries of regular and special meetings
- Properly conducted staff, board, and technical meetings
- Annual Indirect Cost Plan
- Staff trained and well-qualified in current technical, planning and funding issues

Element II. Planning Documentation

Planning documentation tasks demonstrate how state and federal requirements for the documentation of regional and urban transportation planning activities for required and optional MPO and RTPO tasks identified in the annual UPWP are met.

WCOG staff worked with local jurisdictions to complete FY 2009-2014 Transportation Improvement Programs (TIPs) in the prescribed format, combined the County and City TIPs into Metropolitan and Regional TIPs and submit them to WSDOT for inclusion into the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP). WCOG participated in activities relative to development of a new Washington Transportation Plan by volunteering for membership on a WTP advisory group.

WCOG staff provided transportation model information including preliminary demand forecasting information and data to local public and private organizations, officials and individuals for their



own planning processes. WCOG staff also worked with all local jurisdictions to ensure the upcoming model improvements accurately reflect the true nature of urban and rural travel patterns. Individual consultations by the Senior Transportation Planner with city and county representatives have provided substantial information with which to improve the WCOG travel demand model. The SFY 2010 UPWP was completed and adopted by the Whatcom Transportation Policy Board. Additionally, WCOG completed, adopted and processed amendments to the 2009 Regional and Metropolitan Transportation Improvement Program through TTAC, and through public hearings conducted by the Whatcom Transportation Policy Board. TIP amendment requests were coordinated with member jurisdictions, advertised, processed, approved and submitted according to state guidelines. Additionally, steps were taken to complete conversion of the WCOG model from EMME2 to TransCAD, a newer, more capable and flexible modeling platform also used by the City of Bellingham.

WCOG has continued its U.S. Census affiliate status and accordingly disseminated Census 2000 information and data on request to other public and private organizations as well as individuals through personal service and web site information. Staff also responded to requests for census data mapping, demographics and other requests for census-based information.

International Mobility and Trade Corridor (IMTC) project activities continued throughout the year with monthly steering committee, quarterly core group meetings. WCOG staff led the IMTC organization through identification of border infrastructure needs and coordinated cooperative, international partnerships and project teams to meet those needs. WCOG staff also managed several border related projects including an ATIS-based data management system and helped the City of Sumas plan for a freight flow modifications to ease commercial vehicle disruption to small city traffic flows.

The WCOG web site was, once again, upgraded to improve public access to information concerning all WCOG's transportation planning and other activities, products and project status. Work was also completed for adding a new separate "Transportation Town" web-site making more and better transportation information available to the general public through interactive web access. Transportation Town won an innovation in communication award from the Transportation Research Board.

In cooperation with "Farmhouse Gang" members WCOG led a project completing a household travel survey for Skagit, Island and Whatcom Counties enabling more representative travel demand modeling for all three counties. This work began and was completed during FY 2009. Additional research projects, such as a passenger-only ferry economics study, passenger rail research, and a Farmhouse Gang retreat/workshop were conducted using funding from a previously awarded Congressional High Priority Project.

The WCOG Deputy Director/Planning Director was elected Vice Chair of the MPO/RTPO/WSDOT Coordinating Committee and participated in multiple committee activities.

WCOG staff worked extensively to comply with guidance and mandates established by WSDOT leadership for submitting projects for possible funding under the federal ARRA program.



Planning Documentation Work Products:

- Regional and Metropolitan TIPs comprised of regionally significant and financially constrained projects
- SAFETEA-LU compliant Metropolitan and Regional Plans
- Whatcom Transportation Policy Board Adopted SFY 2010 UPWP
- Annual FY 2008 UPWP report
- Board-approved UPWP and TIP amendments including requisite public participation activities.
- Resolutions relating to the UPWP and to the MPO/RTPO structure
- Accurate summaries of Community Transportation Advisory Group meetings
- Adequate and properly announced and conducted public meetings
- Records of process associated with the IMTC Project, a well-coordinated forum for consideration of U.S. - Canadian border issues, and identification and prioritization of needed border-related improvements in the region
- Grant applications for state and federal funding of projects of a regional nature consistent with regional and local plans
- Contributions to an improved Washington Transportation Plan
- Compliance Economic Stimulus/ARRA programs and processes established by WSDOT

Element III. MPO and RTPO Program Management

Meet state and federal requirements for maintenance and completion of regionally coordinated MPO and RTPO tasks and planning. Act as coordinating body linking the transportation interests and preferences of jurisdictions within the region with the requirements of the FTA, FHWA and WSDOT.

WCOG staff worked with WSDOT staff to work toward consistency between the Whatcom and Washington State Transportation Plans.

WCOG convened monthly Transportation Technical Advisory Committee (TTAC) meetings with activities including TTAC recommendations to the Whatcom Transportation Policy Board ARRA program compliance, Federal Functional Classification actions, TIP amendments, and other priority actions. Additionally WCOG continued to provide staff support and leadership for the MPO/RTPO Community Transportation Advisory Group (CTAG) providing community input and perspective to both the TTAC and the Whatcom Transportation Policy Board, and working on ways to improve the region's transportation system for the future.

WCOG staff led and facilitated decision-making processes of the Whatcom Transportation Policy Board including emerging transportation and related funding issues such as discussions of improved public participation in those processes and enhancement of local involvement in setting priorities.

WCOG combined jurisdictional (including WSDOT) 2009 – 2014 Transportation Improvement Programs into the Metropolitan and Regional TIP (WCOG TIP), reviewed the WCOG TIP with the



Whatcom Transportation Technical Advisory Committee and conducted a public hearing at which the WCOG TIP was approved by the Whatcom Transportation Policy Board, and subsequently forwarded to WSDOT for inclusion in the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP). Public hearings were conducted through the year to complete TIP amendments.

WCOG took steps toward finalizing a move from the EMME2 modeling platform to the TransCAD program. Staff worked closely with member jurisdictions in developing new modeling capability to best serve their forecasting needs, and completed substantial progress in upgrading and improving the WCOG model for forecasting transportation demand in the Whatcom/BC region. Simultaneously, the existing model was also improved and used to assist Whatcom County and its cities in complying with an Urban Growth Area review directive imposed by the WA Growth Management Hearings Board (GMBH).

WCOG staff participated extensively on a County-organized technical advisory committee, established to provide technical support for an elected body convened to help meet the GMBH requirements.

WCOG responded efficiently and effectively to requests from local, state and federal agencies to amend Metropolitan and Regional TIPs and the UPWP as needed.

WCOG organized and facilitated meetings of Canadian, U.S., and Washington State agencies with an interest in border crossing issues. Continuation of this successful effort, entitled the International Mobility and Trade Corridor (IMTC) project, fulfills a needed role in this bi-national region's cooperation and coordination of transportation planning and projects.

WCOG staff continued coordination of regional planning, research, and project-level efforts to identify solutions for relieving delays of Canada-U.S. border crossing traffic including both auto and commercial vehicles, and worked toward implementation of those solutions. Although the IMTC project is clearly an MPO responsibility, most of the IMTC project funding comes from non-MPO/RTPO sources.

WCOG staff also worked to identify freight mobility shortcomings in infrastructure and policies. By identifying needed mobility projects, new initiatives such as feasibility studies for modal shifts and other freight mobility alternatives, future projects. The WCOG Executive Director has worked extensively with WSDOT, ODOT and CalTrans in continuing support for the multiple RTPO, MPO and state DOT efforts aimed at an improved West Coast transportation system. This work is focused through the West Coast Corridor Coalition.

WCOG continued to participate in the multi-county forum known as the "Farmhouse Gang," a five-county, grant-funded, effort to better coordinate and promote transportation choices by encouraging implementation of alternatives to the single occupant vehicle.

Over the last year, WCOG expanded its transportation demand management, commute trip reduction, and congestion and pollution reduction program: Whatcom Smart Trips. This is an on-going incentive-based program to encourage and promote walking, bicycling and transit and



car-pool use. This program has been increasingly effective in attracting participants interested in healthy and pollution-free transportation alternatives. Almost 10,000 participants were recruited over the last year saving nearly 20 million miles of drive alone trips and thousands of tons of carbon-based pollutants.

MPO and RTPO Program Management Products:

- Well-managed TTAC, Transportation Policy Board activities, and decision-making processes, open to, and encouraging public participation, including the Community Transportation Advisory Group
- Forums for discussion of regional transportation issues among local/regional jurisdictions and for increasing cooperation between adjacent jurisdictions including adjoining counties, and British Columbia, Canada
- Appropriate, effective and well-organized public meetings
- Regionally approved WCOG TIP
- Substantial participation in local land use processes
- Effective response to the ARRA program
- Regional Transportation Strategies
- Efficient use of RTPO and MPO funding
- Completed data sets and research related to freight mobility with a border focus
- An active community advisory group focused on improving the system over time
- An organized West Coast Corridor Coalition
- Inter-county transit services enabled through Farmhouse Gang activities
- Substantial progress toward a more responsive and accurate transportation model
- An on-going Smart Trips incentive-based transportation demand management and commute trip reduction program.

Element IV. Transportation Modeling/Data Collection/Technical Assistance

Maintain, and keep current, a travel demand model for use in assisting member jurisdictions in forecasting travel demand associated with various land use scenarios, and in modeling regional traffic associated with projected growth and other comprehensive planning activities. In the Whatcom Region, this includes WA – BC border crossing volumes and flows in both directions. An important part of border traffic flow is commercial traffic. Data gathering is an important part of these activities. Border crossing data is continually in demand from multiple agencies, including local, State and federal. WCOG is a clearing house for such data through its Border Data Warehouse web site.

The objective of this task is to make accurate and current transportation data available to member jurisdictions, WSDOT, federal agencies and to the public, and to provide technical planning assistance to agencies in the region desiring such assistance.

Last year's WCOG modeling efforts focused on ways to improve it. A new software platform, TransCAD was selected as the best among three evaluated. WCOG staff began work immediately with the software vendor, Caliper Corp, to convert the existing EMME2 model to the



TransCAD platform. Utility of this converted model was confirmed, but need for newer and better data was also confirmed. Over the last year WCOG staff has worked with Whatcom County and all its cities, WSDOT, Farmhouse Gang members, and other regional and border interests to assemble the best possible data. This task was substantially completed over the last year. New traffic counts were requested and obtained from the County, cities and WSDOT. A 400-household survey was conducted in the County, and results input to the model. Individual County and city interviews were iteratively completed to ensure consistency with jurisdictional realities and plans.

The Whatcom Council of Governments provided technical support and coordination for member jurisdictions on local and regional transportation issues. Land use planning activities requiring modeling were attended and guidance as well as information and suggestions were provided. Modeling services were made available to both staff and their consultants.

WCOG also provided to jurisdictional planning staff with substantial assistance with meeting WSDOT and FHWA Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) requirements.

Transportation Modeling/Data Collection/Technical Assistance Products:

- Forums for reaching consensus on data-related regional transportation issues among local jurisdictions.
- Ability to produce higher quality transportation demand forecasts as requested by members and others.
- Appropriate public meetings and records of such proceedings
- Properly prepared jurisdictional Transportation Improvement Programs
- Regional Transportation Strategies
- Written and direct communications with member jurisdictions regarding state and federal transportation policy and funding
- High-quality and timely modeling services provided to local and State entities.

Element V. Multi-Modal and Public Transportation Planning

Integration of public transportation considerations into the Regional Transportation Plan and, to the extent possible, in jurisdictions' land use plans. Cooperate with local public transportation providers in long and short range planning efforts and in implementation of ADA and Title VI requirements.

Last year WCOG staff participated in "Farmhouse Gang" five county forum. Through the entire year, WCOG was contracted by the Skagit Council of Governments to provide administration services including meeting organization, facilitation and, to a degree, leadership. The Farmhouse Gang's efforts are focused on transportation alternatives such as transit, rail, passenger-only ferry and non-motorized modes. This coalition effort has resulted in establishment of inter-county transit between Whatcom and Snohomish Counties which has been followed up with continuing service as far as Everett, where other connections may be made. Multiple transit agencies are among the members and actively participate in discussions and actions to improve



the five-county system. WCOG staff has acted to streamline and update mailing lists for the different levels of member participation. The mailing list is now up to date and includes more than 450 contacts from both public and private sector interests.

The Executive Director, Deputy Director, IMTC Project Manager, and other staff members attended and participated as speakers in multiple national and regional transportation conferences this year including those sponsored by TRB, ITE, FHWA, WSDOT, the BC Province, Transport Canada and other national, State, regional, and local entities. They also continued to work with Skagit-Island RTPO as well as British Columbia, Canada public transportation providers and their representatives to promote transit connections among adjacent counties and lower-mainland British Columbia.

WCOG staff continued working closely with WTA staff to further develop and promote the Smart Trips Program and other aspects of commute trip reduction and transportation demand management in the interest of reduced congestion and pollution, and increased transit use.

WCOG also worked with Whatcom County and City of Bellingham staff in developing CTR Plan ordinance language, for adoption by their respective Councils that is consistent with the Regional CTR Plan under the Washington State CTR Efficiency Act.

Multi-Modal and Public Transportation Planning Products:

- Forums for discussion and recommendations on regional transportation issues, including provision of transit services.
- Regional public transportation priorities and strategies
- Completed data sets and research related to public transportation and other transportation alternatives
- A transportation demand model that will accommodate public transit
- Continued implementation of a series of traveler information kiosks offering information on access to multiple modes
- Continued work to develop a plan to encourage provision of cross-border transit and related connections
- Completed work with Bellingham and Whatcom County in developing adoptable and appropriate ordinance consistent with the Regional Plan

Element VI. Other

Other areas of MPO/RTPO activity reflect a regional demand based not on regulatory requirements, but more on regional needs and opportunities for greater co-operation and potential partnerships for a higher level of transportation efficiency. Planning support is frequently needed in these areas and is supported by MPO and RTPO planning requirements.



Through the International Mobility and Trade Corridor (IMTC) border stakeholder group, WCOG has identified and sought funding for U.S.-Canada border related projects aimed at improving freight and auto flow efficiency and preserving economic trade stability. These projects are held by border stakeholders to be important medium- and long-term solutions contributing to a more efficient overall border transportation dynamic.

Projects funded and underway in the Whatcom/Cascadia border region for FY 2009 completed during the last year included Phase one of the "Border Circulation Plan" and the third wave of a program to collect substantial border-related commercial vehicle data through intercept surveys.

The West Coast Corridor Coalition (WCCC) continued to meet and refine goals and objectives under the leadership of a contracted Executive Director. That short-term contract was funded with a federal allocation of funds through a Congressional "earmark." The WCCC hopes to coordinate standards such as ITS among the member states and work to solve north/south corridor transportation issues collectively.

Using funding obtained from local and State sources, WCOG has instituted a TDM program aimed at reducing reliance on autos. The program is entitled Smart Trips, is internet web-based, and employs a variety of incentives to encourage travel by foot, bicycle and public transportation. Smart Trips has become a popular and successful program.

"Other" Products:

- Transportation planning support for regional projects
- An organized process for promoting integration of ITS technologies and methodologies into existing and future regional transportation planning
- Transportation alternatives and information for tourists and commuters
- A properly funded, organized and staffed cross-border stakeholder coalition for border mobility improvements
- Better informed travelers, enhanced safety and reduced congestion in border communities
- Integration of ITS technologies to enhance speed and efficiency for the flows of commercial vehicles crossing the Whatcom region's border with British Columbia, Canada
- The West Coast Corridor Coalition
- An effective TDM program

Element VII. Unfunded

Accomplish additional work identified as significant and appropriate for the Whatcom MPO/RTPO by local, state or federal agencies. Seek funding for completion of these tasks from appropriate sources. Selection of Vancouver as the site for the 2010 Winter Olympics indirectly imposes added burden for WCOG. These responsibilities fall within or parallel to other elements but remain unfunded.



WCOG has been collecting and disseminating transportation-related information concerning impacts and opportunities presented by the Vancouver B.C./Whistler 2010 Winter Olympic games and responds to requests for additional work in planning and preparing for system demands potentially created by 2010 activities. Little work has been accomplished in evaluating the economic impacts on this region created by policy decisions on both sides of the border. WCOG continues to seek ways to fund development of an econometric model for this purpose.

Through a partnership between WCOG and WSDOT, a successful application was submitted to FHWA under the significant but as yet unfunded Congested Border Relief Program. Last year, the International Mobility and Trade Corridor project was selected in a National competition as a designated “Congested Border.” It is hoped this recognition will lead to funding for projects soon to be identified as part of the WA – BC Border Circulation Plan.

“Unfunded” Products:

- A forum for exchange of 2010 Olympics-related information
- Additional products resulting from requests for WCOG/MPO/RTPO involvement
- Efforts to bring together partners interested in econometric analyses of transportation issues
- Funding for border improvement projects

TABLE A Synopsis of UPWP Budget for SFY2009

Program (FHWA, FTA, RTPO, etc.)	Amended UPWP Budget	Expenditures for SFY 2009	% Budget expended	Carryforward amount
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	(sfy09 only)			
FHWA PL	315,443	315,443	100%	0
FTA	49,970	49,970	100%	0
WSDOT RTPO	87,898	87,898	100%	n/a
WSDOT Bike Month	10,000	10,000	100%	n/a
FHWA STP(U)	170,000	127,800	75%	n/a
Whatcom Smart Trips	800,000	800,000	100%	n/a
Totals	1,433,311	1,391,111	97%	

Expenditures include local match and carry-forward unless noted otherwise.