



**Washington State
Department of Transportation**

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WSDOT Communications

2009 end of year report

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WSDOT Communications

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Communications with the public and the media is a high priority for the Washington State Department of Transportation. Our agency management, starting with Secretary of Transportation Paula Hammond, has known for some time the importance of open and transparent communications in building trust with the public. WSDOT management throughout the agency has embraced the need for a high quality professional communications program.

In this, the inaugural annual report for the WSDOT Communications and Outreach effort, you will see that WSDOT was active in its promotion of agency activities by producing news releases, hosting special events and developing new tools for sharing information.

These new tools, what the industry has named “social media,” have become embedded and generally accepted throughout the WSDOT communications program as critical channels for delivering information to specialized target audiences.

WSDOT communications participated in a number of high priority agency initiatives in the past year including “Go Orange for Work Zone Safety,” implementation of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, hosting US Secretary Ray LaHood, building the state’s first new Washington State Ferry since 1999, and support for the delivery of the largest capital construction program in the state’s history. We also supported critical public information outreach during major flooding, snow storms, landslides and closed highways.

Governor Chris Gregoire, Secretary Paula Hammond and other dignitaries host US Secretary Ray LaHood in the spring of 2009



The WSDOT program earned some tremendous honors in 2009, collecting awards from the National Transportation Public Affairs Workshop – AASHTO’s Public Affairs Subcommittee – for best web site, best use of social media and best internal video. AASHTO also honored WSDOT with the Francis B. Francois Award for Innovation for the agency’s innovative use of social media tools. Additional honors included grand prize winner in the national Faces in Transportation Award, and Greg Phipps, WSDOT communications staff, took a photo that was included in Engineering News Record’s Year in Construction photo essay.

As we look back on 2009, WSDOT communications performed well. The goal of building upon the public’s trust was met. Many state and local governments have looked to WSDOT for help with best practices – from media relations to social media outreach to measurement. We are proud to serve this role for WSDOT and for the citizens of the state of Washington.

Outreach

News Releases (Regional/Modes breakout)	Count
Aviation	19
Eastern Region	23
Freight/Rail	18
Headquarters	51
North Central Region	20
Northwest Region (includes SR 520: 17, AWW: 18, I-405: 9)	244
Olympic Region (includes Hood Canal Bridge: 29)	101
Public Transportation (may not reflect releases included in HQ count)	3
South Central Region	34
Southwest Region	100
Tolling	6
Washington State Ferries	46
Total	665

Mike Westbay from South Central Region takes notes with a Granite Northwest contract employee, on the I-82 Grandview to Granger westbound pavement repair project, summer 2009



Twitter Messages	Count
Total followers at beginning of year	3,800
Total of followers at end of 2009 (95% increase in followers)	7,400
Total messages	2,479

Blogs (4 different blogs)	Count
Posts on WSDOT Blog	232
Posts on Federal Transportation Issues	205
Posts on SR 539 Guide Meridian Blog	179
Posts on Hood Canal bridge blog (most commented)	71

The WSDOT blog averaged over 365 page views a day, but its true value was in the discussion that the comment section was able to foster.



Governor Gregoire greets US Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood

Internet

The WSDOT Web site remained relatively flat in usage this year with an average of 944,000 page views per day (last year was 1 million per day). Page views per visit were also a little lower at 10.51 (last year was 12.92).



This can be attributed to very mild weather throughout the year. The largest growth area we saw was the use of mobile devices, this area grew over 40% in 2009 and is a trend we expect to continue to see grow.

Intranet

The Intranet saw a minor increase in usage this year. Average daily page views remained around 27,000 page views per day (26,500 last year). Employees averaged 3.8 page views per visit.

The key items people access are:

- 1. Employee Directory
- 2. Human Resources
- 3. Search
- 4. Regional News
- 5. News items
- 6. Forms

Constituent Correspondence

From January 1 to December 2, 2009, HQ Customer Service received 4,570 e-mails and responded directly to 2,136.



Deputy Secretary Dave Dye speaks with the media at a press event.



Secretary Paula Hammond participates in a ribbon cutting ceremony for the Hood Canal Bridge, May 2009



Don Whitehouse, Southcentral Region Administrator at the I-90 Snoqualmie Pass event



Communications Director Lloyd Brown checks on last minute details



Secretary Paula Hammond assists in the Burley Olalla ribbon cutting in September 2009

Results/Outcomes

In November 2009, WSDOT asked its customers to complete an online survey. Invitations were sent out to roughly 65,000 e-mail addresses that are subscribed to the agency's GovDelivery listserv distribution lists. In addition, we published the survey link on our Twitter feed and on our WSDOT blog. In a week, we had gathered more than 5,600 responses.

The results from the 2009 Communications and Public Information Evaluation Survey will be used to establish a baseline against which we can measure our communication program.

WSDOT Communication and Public Information Evaluation Survey

What is your overall impression of the Washington State Department of Transportation?

Answer Options	Response Percent
Strongly favorable	35.4%
Somewhat favorable	49.0%
Somewhat unfavorable	10.1%
Strongly unfavorable	4.1%
Don't know	1.5%

84%

How do you rate WSDOT's performance in general?

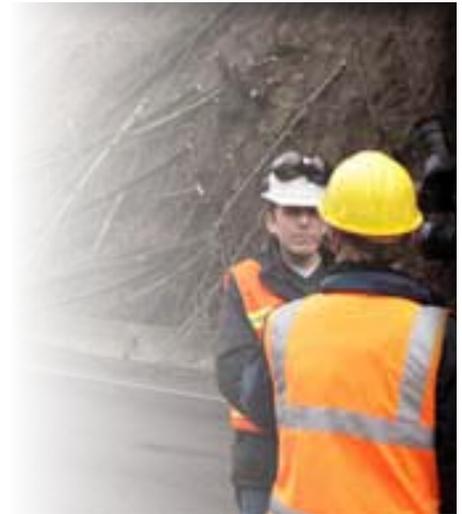
Answer Options	Response Percent
Excellent	22.0%
Good	52.2%
Fair	17.9%
Poor	4.7%
Terrible	1.8%
Don't know	1.5%

74%

Do you trust WSDOT to keep its commitments to the public?

Answer Options	Response Percent
Always	20.9%
Usually	52.3%
Sometimes	16.9%
Rarely	5.3%
Never	1.3%
Don't know	3.3%

72%



WSDOT spokesperson with local media at the site of the SR 18 landslide.

From where do you get your news?

Answer Options	Response Percent
Web site	78.8%
Social media like twitter, youtube and facebook	9.9%
E-mail	52.7%
Newspaper	69.6%
Magazines	22.1%
TV	67.9%
Radio	62.3%
Friends and family	33.7%
Other	9.0%



Governor Gregoire and Paula Hammond along with local elected officials cut the ribbon at the Bremerton Tunnel opening event, Summer 2009



Secretary Paula Hammond speaks to the media at the Smarter Highways kickoff event.



Paula Hammond addresses the media on the high speed rail announcement at the capital.



Governor Gregoire addresses the media on two trains daily to Vancouver B.C.



Senator Mary Margaret Haugen tours Todd Shipyard the construction site of the 64-car ferry Chetzemoka.

How do you like to learn about WSDOT projects and services?

Answer Options	Response Percent
Web site	69.7%
Social media like twitter, youtube and facebook	5.0%
E-mail	56.0%
Newspaper	49.3%
Magazines	4.5%
TV	42.9%
Radio	37.8%
Billboards	10.3%
Rest stops	9.8%
Pamphlets	10.7%
Family and friends	10.5%
Other	8.1%

How do you like to learn about traffic incidents and highway closures?

Answer Options	Response Percent
Web site	66.4%
Social media like twitter, youtube and facebook	7.1%
E-mail	50.1%
Newspaper	29.5%
Magazines	1.7%
TV	51.0%
Radio	66.4%
Billboards	17.3%
Rest stops	8.3%
Pamphlets	3.2%
Family and friends	7.4%
Other	8.8%

Please rate the following short statements about WSDOT's communication program.

Answer Options	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
The information WSDOT provides about projects, highway incidents and construction closures is timely.	46.2%	42%	6.4%	1.8%	3.4%
The information WSDOT provides about projects, highway incidents and construction closures is accurate.	43.9%	43.1%	6.6%	1.7%	4.5%
The information WSDOT provides about projects, highway incidents and construction closures is understandable.	49.1%	40.4%	5.5%	1.7%	3.1%

Please rate the following short statements about WSDOT.

Answer Options	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
WSDOT is trustworthy -- open, transparent and accountable.	27%	49%	11%	5.4%	7.5%
WSDOT helps keep me and my family safe.	38.6%	47%	7.1%	2.8%	4.3%
WSDOT cares about the environment.	35.2%	44%	7.7%	3.6%	9.3%
WSDOT is fighting traffic congestion.	28.1%	42.8%	15%	9.5%	4.5%
WSDOT listens and addresses concerns from the public.	24%	43.6%	14.3%	8.6%	9.4%

In December 2009, we sent out an online survey to media outlets throughout Washington state asking for feedback on WSDOT's communication efforts. We collected more than 80 responses from around the state, representing large news organizations and small town news blogs.

The results from the 2009 Communication and Media Information Evaluation Survey will be used to establish a baseline against which we can measure our communication program.

WSDOT Communication and Media Information Evaluation Survey

Please rate the following short statements about WSDOT media relations and outreach efforts.

Answer Options	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
WSDOT news releases are newsworthy	64.6%	32.9%	2.4%	0	0
WSDOT news releases are timely	69.5%	25.6%	4.8%	0	0
WSDOT news releases are understandable	70.3%	28.3%	1.23%	0	0
WSDOT public meetings are newsworthy	38.7%	35%	10%	0	16.2%
WSDOT public events (such as news conferences, ribbon-cutting or ground-breaking ceremonies) are newsworthy	34.1%	45.1%	9.7%	2.4%	8.5%
WSDOT managers and staff are available when requested for interviews.	70.3%	24.7%	2.4%	0	2.4%

Please rate the following short statements about transportation in Washington and about the WSDOT.

Answer Options	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
WSDOT is an open, transparent and accountable public service agency.	43%	43%	5%	1.2%	7.6%
WSDOT managers and staff are open, transparent and accountable.	42.5%	42.5%	1.2%	2.5%	11.2%
WSDOT helps keep me and my family safe.	47.3%	30.2%	5.2%	0	17.1%
WSDOT cares about the environment.	24.3%	38.4%	2.5%	1.2%	33.3%
WSDOT is fighting traffic congestion.	28.2%	44.8%	2.5%	3.8%	20.5%
The information WSDOT provides about road projects, highway incidents and construction closures is timely.	69.1%	23.4%	7.4%	0	0
The information WSDOT provides about road projects, highway incidents and construction closures is accurate.	69.1%	23.4%	3.7%	0	0
The information WSDOT provides about road projects, highway incidents and construction closures is understandable.	62.9%	29.6%	2.4%	0	0



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