

Eastside Corridor Tolling Study - DRAFT

Executive Advisory Group Meeting #2 – Meeting Summary

July 29, 2009

1:30 – 4:00 p.m.

Renton City Hall, Council Chambers

1055 S Grady Way, Renton, WA 98057-3232

Executive Advisory Group members in attendance:

- | | |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Mayor David Hill, City of Algona | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Mary Alyce Burleigh, Sound Transit Board |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Carol Thompson, Community Transit | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Mayor Grant Degginger, City of Bellevue |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Dan Mathis, FHWA | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Mayor James Lauinger, City of Kirkland |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Mayor Suzette Cooke, City of Kent | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Mayor Jim Haggerton, City of Tukwila |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ron Posthuma, King County | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Rep. Marcie Maxwell, Washington State |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> David Hull, King County Metro | House of Representatives |

Eastside Corridor Tolling Study Project Team

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| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Craig Stone, WSDOT Toll Division | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Colleen Gants, Eastside Corridor |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Kim Henry, Eastside Corridor | Communications |
| Project Director | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Laura LaBissoniere, Eastside Corridor |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Denise Cieri, Eastside Corridor | Communications |
| Project Deputy Director | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Patrick Conrad, Eastside Corridor |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Wendy Taylor, Eastside Corridor | Communications |
| Team | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Jennifer Sandberg, Eastside Corridor |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Karl Westby, Eastside Corridor | Communications |
| Team | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> David Hopkins, WSDOT Toll Division |

Note: These meeting notes are intended to capture the discussion at the meeting including questions and comments from the group. This is not intended to be a formal testimony or complete transcript of the meeting. Meeting materials, including the PowerPoint presentation, are available on the Web at:

<http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/Tolling/EastsideCorridor/Library.htm>.

I. Welcome and Introductions

Craig Stone, WSDOT Toll Division Director, welcomed the Executive Advisory Group (EAG) members and asked attendees to introduce themselves and the agency or organization they represent.

Craig provided an overview of the agenda and explained that the purpose of meeting #2 is to educate the group on the benefits of managed lanes, confirm the study options, and gather feedback on the public outreach plan and materials.

Craig provided a recap of meeting #1 and summarized several potential funding/phasing principles that emerged from that meeting. Those were: 1) Revenue generated from tolling should stay in the corridor. 2) Ensure phasing is logical for the user and creates a seamless corridor, and 3) Transit is a priority in the Eastside Corridor.

II. Public Comment

There were no public comments.

III. How do express toll lanes work?

Craig introduced a tolling video and explained that its purpose is to show how express toll lanes work. He requested that EAG members provide input before the video is shown at the open houses in August.

When the video was finished, Craig asked the group to share their input.

Discussion

- Kent Mayor Suzette Cooke commented that the background music was a distraction. She also said public education is critical and access points will be a large topic of discussion among Kent residents. Craig Stone responded that WSDOT has tried to build access points on SR 167 in-between major interchanges and this continues to be an issue of concern. He emphasized safety is a critical factor in determining the location of access ramps and explained that express toll lanes are designed to accommodate longer trips. Mayor Cooke added that the signs on SR 167 are often blocked by trucks and should be installed on both sides of the road.
- Kirkland Mayor James Lauinger agreed that access points will continue to be a large public outreach challenge. In Kirkland, the exits and entrance ramps are very close together and it will be difficult to decide where to build access ramps. WSDOT will need to work closely with local governments.

- Mary-Alyce Burleigh, Sound Transit board member, encouraged the project team to also consider arterial traffic and transit operations. Craig Stone agreed and announced that David Hull with King County Metro would address transit further. Craig added that transit speed and reliability remains the number one priority.
- Algona Mayor David Hill commented that it is a good idea to emphasize that express toll lanes will improve traffic flow in the general purpose lanes. He added that as an advocate and frequent HOT lane user, it's also important to convey the benefit of fuel savings. WSDOT's Craig Stone responded that the SR 167 HOT lane annual report indicates a 10 percent improvement in speed in both the general purpose and HOT lane.

IV. Corridor traffic performance

Karl Westby, with the I-405 project team, provided an overview of traffic performance on I-405. He explained that WSDOT's goal is to achieve optimal throughput because it is the most efficient use of the system. He referenced a speed curve animation to show how congestion determines vehicle throughput.

According to traffic data, the general purpose lanes on I-405 are currently operating at half capacity because they are over utilized. Express toll lanes are able to operate at the optimal throughput level, or 100% efficiency.

V. HOV performance and funding

Karl Westby provided an overview of current HOV performance on I-405. He explained that the general purpose and HOV lanes on I-405 are currently not meeting performance standards. The HOV lanes are not sustainable for future use and the system overall is unreliable.

Transit perspective

David Hull, with King County Metro, agreed with Westby, announcing that transit agencies look for speed and reliability. David passed out a white paper summarizing King County Metro's position on the Eastside Corridor tolling study. He emphasized that current transit routes are unreliable because the HOV lanes are at capacity. From a transit perspective, Hull says access points are the biggest concern and should be carefully designed.

Carol Thompson, with Community Transit, added there are tradeoffs between providing for the longer trip and accommodating shorter transit trips. Tolling could increase transit demand and provide a much needed transit revenue source. She added that if access to the express toll lanes is too restrictive, either in terms of number of access points or design of access points, many shorter HOV trips including bus trips will no longer be made in these lanes and will thus add more volume to the GP lanes. Since shorter HOV trips are a large part of the current HOV traffic, this could have the unintended

consequence of the express toll lanes looking empty and the shorter HOV trips given no advantage. She said the subject of access points, number and design, needs much more study and discussion.

Discussion

- Tukwila Mayor Jim Haggerton commented that vehicles merging from the HOV lane to the off-ramp cause frequent delays in the HOV lanes. He cited the I-90 to I-405 exit as an example. Craig Stone responded that weaves are often inefficient, but that structural changes are expensive.
- Dan Mathis, with FHWA (Federal Highway Administration), added there are a number of direct access ramps in the Puget Sound region. He asked if there has been an evaluation of transit times. David Hull said, there haven't been any specific studies conducted, but any time a service change is made, transit times are considered.
- Kim Becklund, with the City of Bellevue, announced there has been a dramatic decrease in traffic since the opening of the NE 6th street on-ramp in Bellevue.
- Craig Stone explained that bus rapid transit (BRT) was an initial component in the I-405 Master Plan. He called on Mary-Alyce Burleigh, Sound Transit board member, to explain BRT in relation to Sound Transit's plans. Burleigh commented that BRT is a building block in ST2 and that \$50 million has been dedicated to enhancing BRT on the I-405 corridor. This money will only be made available if the BNSF rail line is not developed by 2011.
- Mayor Hill asked if the second express toll lane could be dedicated as a transit only lane. Craig Stone answered specific options will be discussed later.

Transportation funding

Dan Mathis, with FHWA, provided an overview of the national tolling perspective. He explained that gas tax is no longer a sufficient or reliable source of revenue for highway projects and tolling is being considered nationwide.

Discussion

- Ron Posthuma, with King County, said since some vehicles are now twice as fuel efficient, equity in terms of user pay should get more consideration. He added

- Mayor Haggerton added that he has driven toll roads in Florida and Texas and wants to know what toll revenue pays for? Does it pay for new roads or maintenance? Dan Mathis answered that he cannot speak to those states in particular, but that in many states, toll authorities are developed, as separate agencies from the state DOT. Their purpose is to implement and manage toll facilities. In general, toll revenue is designated to fund the roads that are tolled, not other projects.
- Craig Stone added there is a wide range of tolling organizations. Some projects pay for themselves while others don't generate much revenue.

V. Previous studies

Kim Henry, Eastside Corridor Project Director and Denise Cieri, Eastside Corridor Deputy Project Director, gave a brief overview of previous studies conducted on I-405 to provide contextual framework for the 2009 Eastside Corridor Tolling Study.

VI. Proposed Eastside Corridor study options

Henry and Cieri introduced five preliminary study options, ranging from the most basic to the most detailed systems. They explained that these five options will be analyzed and cost, revenue, and performance information for each option will be shared at future meetings. Henry asked the group to provide feedback and to identify any gaps.

1. **Study Option #1** consists of primarily funded projects. This option includes the addition of a two lane express toll lane system from SR 520 to SR 522 and one lane from SR 522 to I-5. Further south on SR167, we would add one southbound HOT lane from 8th Street E to S 277th Street (Stage 4).
2. **Study Option #2** includes all elements in study option #1 and converts HOV lane on I-405 from Renton to Bellevue to a one lane express toll lane, creating a 30-mile tolled system on I-405
3. **Study Option #3** includes all elements in study option #2 and adds a direct connector between I-405 and SR 167, creating a continuous 40+ mile Eastside Corridor system.
4. **Study Option #4** includes all elements in study option #3 and builds a second lane between Renton and Bellevue, allowing for a 20-mile two lane express toll lane system on I-405 from SR 167 to SR 522. In addition, a northbound lane will be built on SR 167 from 8th Street E to 15th Street SW (Stage 5). Option 4 creates a more robust 40+ mile Eastside Corridor system

5. **Study Option #5** includes all elements in study option #4 and adds a general purpose lane between Renton and Bellevue on I-405, an idea closer to what's in the master plan. Option 5 also adds a second express toll lane between SR 522 and I-5 and builds one HOT lane on north and southbound SR167 between SR 512 and 8th Street E (Stage 6). Option 5 creates a 50+ mile Eastside Corridor managed lane system.

The group agreed that these five options should be considered. No additional options were suggested.

VII. Access Points

Kim Henry explained that there are several types of access points being considered. He referenced a graphic to show how cars could merge onto one and two lane systems as well as a direct access system.

Discussion

- Mayor Lauinger asked if option #1 is funded. Kim Henry answered yes. Lauinger asked if cost will be included in the presentation of these options. WSDOT's Craig Stone explained that option #1 builds off the gas tax and there is a \$90 million unfunded gap for these improvements. The toll revenue will likely be more than double the remaining cost. Craig added that for option #5, WSDOT has not yet conducted funding analysis. Kim Henry added that for option #4, toll revenue could fund approximately 25-40% of the project. Lauinger asked if it's reasonable to expect that the remaining cost will be funded. Craig Stone answered that WSDOT needs to conduct more thorough finance plans. The legislature no longer provides 100% funding.
- Mayor Cooke asked if funding is available on SR 167. WSDOT's Denise Cieri answered that SR 167 also has some funding in place. Craig Stone added that WSDOT realizes the need to extend improvements down to the SR 512/410 interchange.
- Mayor Cooke announced freight access is an important aspect to incorporate.
- Mayor Hill commented that he did not see the flyover connection in the I-405/SR 167 improvements. Kim Henry replied that the flyover creates a direct system from I-405 to SR 167. Craig Stone added, options 3, 4, & 5 would include the flyover connection.

Craig Stone asked the group if there are any areas of concern and whether or not the study options seem like a logical progression.

- Mayor Lauinger stated there are a lot of terms being used and it will be difficult for the public to understand the difference between HOT, HOV, express and general purpose lanes.
- Mayor Degginger said that the public may be hesitant to support an express toll system on I-405 since the HOV lanes were just recently constructed. He expressed concern that there weren't any options to extend existing conditions and said the justification for tolling needs to be clear.
- Mayor Haggerton said that he believes the long term solution to solving highway problems state-wide is to toll all lanes, claiming the users should pay for the system. He argued that we need to address long term solution instead of making short term spot improvements. Craig Stone replied that PSRC's (Puget Sound Regional Council) Transportation 20/40 plan includes incremental steps toward tolling all highway systems and roads.
- Mayor Hill commented that communication will be very important moving forward. He shared that he uses the SR 167 HOT lanes frequently and argued that people would likely pay a higher toll because time is valuable. He encouraged WSDOT to stress the positive aspects of tolls.

VIII. Public Outreach Planning

Colleen Gants, I-405 Communications Manager, announced that many public outreach activities are being conducted to engage local communities in the study. Outreach events include briefings, booths at summer fairs and festivals, focus groups, surveys and public meetings. She announced three open house dates and encouraged attendees to invite their local jurisdictions.

Gants summarized the public comments to date and announced that approximately 2/3-3/4 of comments received support express tolling on the Eastside Corridor.

Discussion

- Mayor Cooke asked if the comment form is only intended to address comments related to I-405. Colleen answered that the form is being used for the entire Eastside Corridor. There was some discussion about the term Eastside Corridor. Mayor Cooke explained that Kent residents won't identify themselves as part of the Eastside Corridor. Gants responded that there is a large map of the Eastside Corridor in front of the summer outreach booth. Jennifer Sandberg, with the project team, added that the purpose of summer outreach is to explain to the public where the study area is located.

- Mayor Degginger commented that the public meetings in August will occur during a popular vacation timeframe. Gants responded that there will be other opportunities for outreach. Ken Henry added there will be another round of public meetings in October.

IX. Wrap-up

Craig Stone summarized a few key themes that arose during the meeting, including terminology, public education, access points, transit, and public expectation for funded and completed projects. Stone asked if there were any further questions or comments. There were none.

Meeting adjourned