

## **Eastside Corridor Tolling Study**

### **Executive Advisory Group Meeting #1 – Meeting Summary**

June 9, 2009

1:30 – 4:00 p.m.

Kirkland City Hall, Peter Kirk Room

#### **Executive Advisory Group members in attendance:**

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|---|---|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Mayor David Hill, City of Algona        | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Brian Goodnight, Snohomish County Council staff           |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Mayor Grant Degginger, City of Bellevue | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Deputy Mayor Sue Singer, PSRC                             |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Mayor James Lauinger, City of Kirkland  | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sonny Putter, City of Newcastle                           |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Randy Corman, Renton City Council       | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Rep. Dan Roach, Washington State House of Representatives |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Dan Mathis, FHWA                        | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Dick Ford, Washington State Transportation Commission     |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Harold Taniguchi, King County           |   |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Mayor Jim Haggerton, City of Tukwila    |   |

#### **Eastside Corridor Tolling Study Project Team and Staff**

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|---|--|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Craig Stone, WSDOT                            | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Wendy Taylor, HNTB                       |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> David Hopkins, WSDOT                          | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Colleen Gants, I-405 Communications      |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Transportation Secretary Paula Hammond, WSDOT | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Hadley Rodero, I-405 Communications      |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Kim Henry, I-405 Project Director             | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Laura LaBissoniere, I-405 Communications |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Denise Cieri, I-405 Deputy Project Director   |  |

*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://wsdot.wa.gov/tolling/eastsidecorridor>*

## **I. Welcome and Opening Remarks**

Craig Stone, Executive Director, WSDOT Toll Division, welcomed Executive Advisory Group (EAG) members and introduced the project team. Attendees introduced themselves and the jurisdiction or agency they represent. Craig Stone then introduced Secretary of Transportation Paula Hammond.

Secretary Hammond summarized WSDOT's *Moving Washington* plan, emphasizing WSDOT's challenge to balance adding strategic capacity, using existing roadways efficiently and implementing new technology.

Although WSDOT is consistently delivering projects along the Eastside Corridor, there are challenges ahead to fund and complete the critical link between SR 167 and I-405 in Renton.

Hammond said that WSDOT was directed by the Legislature to study express toll lanes on I-405 and to conduct public outreach, providing a report to the Governor and the Legislature in January 2010. The 2009 tolling study will include four meetings of the Executive Advisory Group (EAG), four meetings with an Interagency Working Group (IWG) that includes technical staff from corridor cities, and a concurrent public outreach effort.

## **II. Background and Roles and Responsibilities**

Craig Stone provided an overview of the agenda and explained that the purpose of meeting #1 is to provide context and background information on the Eastside Corridor Tolling Study. Craig reviewed the IWG and EAG roles and responsibilities. He asked attendees to share any questions or concerns about their charge going forward.

### **Discussion**

- Mayor Grant Degginger asked if the statistics shown reflect failure of the HOV lanes at current conditions or whether they assume completion of nickel projects. Craig said the numbers do not assume completion of the nickel projects.

## **III. Public Comment**

Craig asked the audience to share any public comments. He explained that each EAG meeting will include a public comment period. Members of the public are welcome to provide brief verbal comments to the group. Longer comments can be submitted to the committee in writing.

### **Comment**

- Will Knedlik, Eastside Rail Now, encouraged the advisory group to look at two important elements; revenue and congestion management. He said there is also a third element – applying economic tools to transportation. He stated that tens of billions of dollars committed to corridor and infrastructure improvements have been locked up because we've never applied economics and that tolling is a first step toward implementing economics to finance transportation infrastructure and operation. Mr. Khedlik asked that the letter he sent to Secretary Hammond on June 8 be provided to the EAG members.

## **IV. Project History**

Kim Henry, I-405 Project Director, summarized the I-405 Master Plan and the SR 167 Corridor Plan and provided an update on the funded and completed projects along both corridors. He identified the funding gaps and emphasized the need to secure funding sources to move forward on critical projects.

### **Discussion**

- Dick Ford asked for more information on what is being done at the I-405/SR 167 interchange. Kim Henry responded that the Renton Stage 2 Widening project will widen I-405 in each direction between SR 167 and SR 169 and add a half diamond connection. RTID identified some improvements at the I-405/SR 167 interchange. It is a critical piece, but there is currently no scheduled project or funding.
- Mayor Jim Haggerton asked if there have been any studies on the advantage of toll lanes versus truck-only lanes. Kim answered that we've looked at the difference in numbers and the percentage of trucks don't make a large enough difference in traffic to justify having truck-only lanes.
- Mayor David Hill commented on the funding of SR 167 southbound improvements and asked if there are planned northbound improvements. Craig Stone added that one of the initial questions WSDOT asked was how to continue a seamless corridor. Secretary Hammond said that WSDOT intended for HOV lanes to continue from SR 512 to I-5, but that the revenue has never been available.
- Sonny Putter commented that the 2002 Master Plan shows a lane imbalance— there is one extra lane in the north end. He asked how the tolling study will address congestion and this structural imbalance. Kim answered that we need to consider different scenarios. Craig added that this is part of the challenge of developing a seamless corridor.
- Dick Ford said that looking at tolling from the perspective of the customer, it is important to provide a seamless and reliable trip. The study should address trouble spots and choke points, especially "midstream" gaps that break-up a trip from one end of the corridor to the other. There is a marketing element that we should remember.

## **V. National and Regional Tolling Overview**

David Hopkins introduced Wendy Taylor, I-405 General Engineering Consulting Lead, HNTB. Wendy provided an overview of tolling projects across the country.

Wendy focused on the following case studies and reviewed slides for each one:

- SR 191, California
- I-15, Salt Lake City, Utah
- I-15, San Diego, California

- I-10 Katy Freeway, Houston, TX
- I-95 Express Lanes, Miami, FL

For each case study, she addressed the objective, background and description of the system and its operations. Successes and challenges for each project were also highlighted.

## Discussion

- Referencing SR 91 in California, Randy Corman, Renton City Council, asked how drivers identify whether the HOV lanes are 2+ or 3+. Craig answered there is clear signage to notify drivers of which lane to use.
- Randy asked how people go about getting *Good to Go!* transponders and how much they cost. Craig said they are \$12 and are available for purchase online and at customer service centers. Drivers set up an account and money is deducted automatically. Wendy added there is a shield to cover the transponder when the vehicle is an HOV.
- Mayor David Hill asked if transponders can be moved to different vehicles. Craig said that WSDOT hopes to use this type of technology in the future. The industry is developing switchable transponders that indicate whether or not the vehicle is an HOV. Jim Haggerton asked if WSDOT has considered an incentive for hybrid or electric cars. Craig answered that since so many people drive hybrids, other states have advised WSDOT not to provide incentives.
- Dick Ford commented that many HOV lanes are already at capacity and if politics prevent conversion of 2+ lanes to 3+ lanes, it will be difficult to improve traffic flow. The issue needs to be discussed openly. Wendy added that most of the national systems are two-lane systems. Dick responded if we are going to improve efficiency of transit, they need to reliably move at highway speeds.

David Hopkins then gave an overview of tolling in Washington, including the Tacoma Narrows Bridge and the SR 167 HOT Lanes Pilot Project. He briefly explained the concept of electronic tolling as an efficient and safe alternative to toll booths and provided an overview of the *Good to Go!* system. David then highlighted the different tolling goals, emphasizing that projects often have a mix of each: revenue generation, congestion management and environmental improvements. He concluded a mixed approach would likely be targeted for the Eastside Corridor.

## Discussion

- Mayor David Hill asked how out-of-state visitors will pay to cross the SR 520 Bridge. David Hopkins said cameras will take a photo of the license plate and WSDOT will send a bill to the vehicle owner. He added there will be a number of methods for people to pay; transponders, pre-paying, post-paying and sending a bill. WSDOT will establish

relationships with Departments of Licensing in other states, to bill out of state residents. Clear signage will be necessary to explain post-pay options. Craig added there are currently five similar systems in North America.

- Kim Becklund, City of Bellevue, asked the team to include time savings estimates in the tolling scenarios. She said the public will value time savings, even if they are bracketed in ranges. David Hopkins said WSDOT has looked at highway signage to indicate time savings.
- Dick Ford said that the results from SR 520 studies are a good indicator of exactly how much people will pay to save time.

## **VI. Eastside Corridor Tolling Study Work Plan**

Denise Cieri, Eastside Corridor Tolling Project Manager, reviewed the study work plan and timeline, highlighting the upcoming EAG meeting schedule and meeting topics for upcoming meetings. She announced there will be community input opportunities throughout the summer. EAG members will be notified of public meetings in their regions and are encouraged to attend.

Craig added the most important charge to the EAG group is to advise and provide feedback on how to explain the Eastside Corridor Tolling Study to the public.

## **VII. Wrap-up**

David Hopkins asked the group to share any questions, issues, or areas of concern.

### **Round Table Discussion**

- Randy Corman stated the City of Renton and Renton City Council support express toll lanes as long as there are access points in Renton. It would be nice to have detail on where the specific access points will be to help generate constituent support.
- Sonny Putter asked what the process is that will be used to identify the various scenarios. The scenarios that are selected need to be usable for everyone.
- Mayor David Hill said although time savings has been mentioned several times, there are other savings that may not be definable, for example fuel savings and congestion relief in the general purpose lanes. Mayor Grant Degginger asked if the revenue will be used strictly for the corridor. He said this principle needs to be articulated because otherwise it is difficult to justify implementing an express toll lane system.
- Harold Taniguchi stated a 2-lane system would be most effective. He asked if it is possible to remove a GP lane or do we have to build a lane to get a two-lane express toll system.
- Dick Ford said whatever system WSDOT comes up with needs to work. He asked WSDOT to consider whether additional investment is needed to make the system work.

If so, make this clear in the final report. Dick said he doesn't want to see a proposal for the Eastside Corridor move forward if it doesn't provide a benefit.

- Dan Mathis said the dialogue about pricing and managed lanes is occurring throughout the country and will continue. The federal gas tax hasn't risen since 1993, and tolling is being considered as an option for revenue generation. The highway trust fund will go into a deficit as early as July 2009.
- Sonny Putter asked to be notified of public open houses as early as possible so EAG members can help advertise them in their communities.

David Hopkins thanked the group for their input.

## **Adjourn**