



**Eastside Corridor Expert Review Panel  
Executive Advisory Group Meeting #1 – Meeting Summary**

September 8, 2010

9:00 a.m. —11:00 a.m.

South Bellevue Community Center

**Expert Review Panel members in attendance:**

- Ginger Goodin, Texas Transportation Institute
- Chuck Fuhs, Parsons Brinkerhoff
- Jennifer Tsien, Florida Turnpike Enterprise
- Janet Lee, Public Resources Advisory Group
- Bob Poole, Independent Transportation Consultant

**Executive Advisory Group members in attendance:**

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|---|---|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Mayor David Hill, City of Algona                  | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Deputy Mayor Sue Singer, PSRC                                       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mayor Pete Lewis, City of Auburn                             | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sanjeep Tandle (alternate for Mayor Kathy Turner), City of Puyallup |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mayor Mark Lamb, City of Bothell                             | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Randy Corman, Renton City Council                                   |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Grant Degginger, Bellevue City Council            | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Carol Thompson, Community Transit/Snohomish County                  |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Mike Canavan (alternate for Dan Mathis), FHWA     | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Claudia Balducci, Sound Transit                                     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Rick Krochalis/Linda Gehrke, FTA                             | <input type="checkbox"/> Mayor David Enslow, City of Sumner   |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Suzette Cook, Mayor of Kent                       | <input type="checkbox"/> Mayor Jim Haggerton, City of Tukwila   |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ron Posthuma, King County Dept. of Transportation | <input type="checkbox"/> Rep. Dan Roach, State Legislature  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Reagan Dunn, King County Council                             | <input type="checkbox"/> Rep. Larry Springer, State Legislature   |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Joan McBride, Mayor of Kirkland                   | <input type="checkbox"/> Senator Rodney Tom, State Legislature  |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sonny Putter, Newcastle City Council              | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Rep. Marcie Maxwell, State Legislature                              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mayor Richard Hildreth, City of Pacific                      | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Dick Ford, Washington State Transportation Commission               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Roger Bush, Pierce County Council                            |   |

**Special Guest**

- David L. Dye, P.E., Washington Deputy Secretary of Transportation

**WSDOT Toll Division Staff**

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|---|--|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Craig Stone, Director | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Todd Merkens         |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Jennifer Ziegler      | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Patty Michaud        |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Rob Fellows           | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Helena Kennedy Smith |

**WSDOT Northwest Region and Eastside Corridor Staff**

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Lorena Eng, Regional Administrator | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Karl Westby, Westby Consulting |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Kim Henry, Director                | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Colleen Gants, PRR             |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Denise Cieri, Deputy Director      | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Amy Danberg, PRR               |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Wendy Taylor, HNTB                 | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Jennifer Sandberg, PRR         |

*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 website at: [www.wsdot.wa.gov/tolling/eastsidecorridor](http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/tolling/eastsidecorridor)*

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

Craig Stone, Executive Director, WSDOT Toll Division, welcomed the Expert Review Panel to Washington and the City of Bellevue. Ginger Goodin of Texas Transportation Institute and Chair of the Expert Review Panel (ERP) introduced herself and the rest of the panel. Serving as Chair of the Executive Advisory Group (EAG), Craig asked EAG members and all other meeting attendees to introduce themselves and their affiliation. Craig then introduced Deputy Secretary of Transportation David Dye to deliver the Secretary's message.

Deputy Secretary Dye summarized WSDOT's *Moving Washington* plan, emphasizing WSDOT's challenge to balance adding capacity strategically, using existing roadways efficiently and implementing new technology. He added that when WSDOT hires a panel of national experts, the department expects honest and open feedback; not just "what we want to hear." He reviewed the ERP charge to address key questions for four topics:

### **Policy**

- Is the state's strategic approach of "Moving Washington" to implement express lanes on I-405/SR 167 viable, appropriate and consistent with emerging federal policy and current state and regional policies?

### **Methodology**

- Are the technical analytical measures and results supporting the Eastside Corridor Express Toll Lanes Report valid?
- Were the right tools applied to the analysis?
- Are the report results reasonable?
- What outcomes are reasonable to expect based on industry experience?

### **Phasing**

- Is the proposed phasing plan to implement an express toll lane system sensible, and provide for logical, usable segments towards a 50-mile Eastside Corridor system?

### **Financial**

- Are the Eastside Corridor Express Toll Lane Report financial assumptions, methods, and forecasts valid?

Dave Dye also reviewed the original EAG Charge from the original Eastside Corridor Express Toll Lanes Study:

- Attend or be represented at all committee meetings;
- Identify issues vital to the Eastside Corridor tolling implementation process;
- Provide strategic advice to WSDOT on the implementation of toll lanes for policy consideration by the Governor and the Legislature;
- Assist in providing opportunities for public, business and civic group input;
- Advise WSDOT on the development of funding and phasing principles to help guide the budget and schedule objectives;
- Represent the governments and agencies they belong to and assist in building/maintaining a regional consensus and keeping their community informed

## **II. Background, Roles, Responsibilities and EAG/ERP Relationship**

Craig started the background review by discussing the focus of the ERP's first meeting, the policy question: *Is the strategic approach of "Moving Washington" to implement express lanes on I-405/SR 167 viable, appropriate and consistent with emerging federal policy and current state and regional policies?*

Craig Stone did the PPT presentation overview, which can be found online in the project web page library. Craig introduced the region and transportation climate, introducing prominent businesses, popular culture, the constrained topography, and growth projections for major Puget Sound cities, like Bellevue. Craig then reviewed the Eastside Corridor and I-405 Master Plan – all work on this corridor stems from the Master Plan process that began in 2002. He commented that WSDOT has made tremendous projects delivering the funded projects from the 2003 and 2005 state gas tax funding. The combined funded projects from I-405 and SR 167 total roughly \$1.7 billion, which is a large percentage of the overall project funding those years. To give perspective, the 2002 I-405 Master Plan of over 150 projects totaled roughly over \$10 billion – so in today's figures, there are still major funding and operational gaps in the system.

Another point Craig made for the ERP Members from around the nation is that while I-405/SR 167 is not a "beltway" per se as they may be familiar with (DC, Dallas, Atlanta), it serves the same purpose as being the only other north-south corridor other than Interstate 5. Also on the slide called "Priority System Gaps," Craig called out the I-405/SR 167 direct connector as well as the I-405 segment between Renton of Bellevue, saying that segment "has some of the highest congestion in our system ... about equal to what we see at I-5/Interstate 90."

Craig covered a slide on Senate & House Bill 2941, the tolling authorization bill from the 2010 Session that passed out of the House and Senate Transportation Committee but did not get off the Senate Floor. Two notes: Bob Poole asked what the reasons or concerns were that kept 2941 from enactment – Craig assured the presentation would cover that later.

Craig also explained the schedule of ERP meetings and how the workshops and report-outs to the EAG will work. Craig overviewed the EAG and Interagency Working Group committee structure, stating how these groups were designed after the successful I-405 corridor planning process that got to a Record of Decision in a little over two years – unheard of at the time. Many

of the people around the table were part of either the original Executive Committee or Steering Committee.

### **III. Public Comment**

Craig turned the public comment portion over to Colleen Gants to facilitate. She 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.

Public comments were provided by Dick Paylor and Dr. Bill Eager of the Eastside Transportation Association (ETA).

**Dick Paylor:** The following paraphrases his comments: “First thing I want to do is say that I’m going to speak against this. All the staff people and WSDOT are our friends and have done terrific work in the I-405 corridor and the master plan should be an example around the country. When I say I’m against the [Eastside Corridor Tolling Study], I mean there’s a lot more work to be done. Compare this proposal to the record of decision (ROD); the ROD did not say to build two HOT lanes on I-405. We believe this requires additional study. The ROD says that we’re going to build two additional general purpose lanes. The current plan could ultimately be better - a comparison study to the Master Plan needs to be done. We have serious questions about the revenue projections, they do not stand up to peer projects, and they do not stand up when you look at SR 167 (revenue)... The revenue projections don’t support the cost; we don’t have a financial plan to implement this type of system.” Mr. Paylor distinguished the SR 167 HOT Lanes – where “you are basically selling unused capacity from I-405, where the capacity is not there in his view. We think that the current plan in front of us now fails from a performance and revenue stand point; there’s no incentive for someone to pay a toll if you don’t have congestion in the other lanes; and it fails financially. The supporters want to believe that this will be a revenue bonanza, but more work needs to be done to see if that is true.”

**Bill Eager:** Introduced himself as the Chairman of Research for the ETA. Paraphrased comments: “I spent an hour going 14 miles on I-405 today – it needs to be fixed. WSDOT says 70% of traffic will go greater than 45 mph; it’s just a result of the modeling; no results are presented in the report on this subject. Also don’t see documentation for claim that HOT lanes could help some traffic come off of local streets. What’s the incentive for people to pay the toll in a HOT lane; does this include a large number of people in the general purpose lanes? The assertion that general purpose lanes all by themselves without a managed lane can’t perform like a manage lane eludes me. Good luck.”

### **IV. Round Table Discussion:**

Craig started the group discussion with the question, “Why even consider managed lanes?”

#### **ERP Comment:**

- **Ginger Goodin** said the issues in front of the group are very representative of those being faced elsewhere – the idea of starting with HOV lanes, and movement to HOT lanes. She said that you can draw comparisons – but reminded folks there are only about 10 projects nationally. She said with the financing and funding crunch facing

areas across the country, you get to policy decisions about designing projects that both manage traffic and help pay for the extra lanes.

- **Chuck Fuhs**, who ERP Members noted may have the most history with these issues, said there are two major and sometimes conflicting trends, and it is easy for stakeholders and the public to be confused. A historical trend has been to put tolls in place to finance a project, sunset them, and take the tolls away. He said we now have a technology-based approach that involves using tolling in tackling mobility issues through better traffic management. He said that traffic management trend is now being intermingled with the idea of using tolling/HOT lanes to finance a project. He said how to transition those two things and balance them – traffic management and the right mix of financing – is the real challenge to meeting those differing goals.
- **Bob Poole** said there has been ongoing debate about HOT or express toll lanes – all the way from ‘can be self-supporting’ to ‘barely support operations and maintenance (O&M).’ He said the idea of the lanes just raising enough revenue to support O&M tends to be truer of “first-generation” toll lane systems. He said more sophisticated ‘next-generation’ efforts revolve around “adding capacity and paying for as much as you can with new revenue ... it’s a whole different ballgame to think about how much capacity you can add and what you ‘give away’ vs. ‘sell.’ He said there used to be only two of these ‘next-generation’ type projects that are financed 2/3rds to 3/4ths through toll revenues, and now there are 4 – Dallas/Ft. Worth being a recent example. He said there are people out there who see these projects as do-able, but they involve policy trade-offs.
- **Janet Lee** noted that with “enormous” revenue shortfalls at the state and federal levels, tolling is becoming “a viable option.” But she said tolling revenue needs to be coupled with some other “public commitment” of funds and there need to be creative ways on how to raise other sources, create special taxing districts, etc. in this environment.
- **Bob Poole** spoke again, saying another emerging trend is what he called “Managed Lanes Networks.” He referenced a plan in the Bay Area to ultimately manage up to 800 lane-miles. He said there are 5-6 metro areas looking at this larger “Managed Lane Networks” concept and 4-5 others giving it serious study.
- **Chuck Fuhs** remarked on Craig Stone’s earlier analogy of I-405/SR SR 167 to a ‘beltway,’ saying tolling/HOT lanes management of corridors that circumnavigate other key corridors can be “tough to grapple with.” He remarked that I-405 is serving “a lot of economic nodes and urban centers” and not just one, so there is not necessarily a “single trend line” for setting up tolling, rates, policy. “You are looking for a customized mix,” he said, and gave an example of Highway 403 outside Toronto that has a mix of approaches to meet rideshare and transit needs. He said there may not be one single approach that meets all needs – solutions may have to be tailored.

- **Jennifer Tsien** of PBS&J and the Florida Turnpike Enterprise discussed the Miami experience, where there had been no financed capacity additions, and now they have two phases of the 95 Express project fully funded. She explained how the 95 Express system is similar to the proposed I-405 express toll lanes because it provides two managed lanes (one converted HOV 2+ lane), operating 24/7 tolling and a registered HOV 3+ occupancy requirement. The 595 Express project had no existing HOV lanes, so in order to be compatible with the I-95 Express—the future, barrier-separated, three-lane facility held to the same registered toll exemptions currently permitted. The only major difference between the two projects is the 595 Express will allow trucks. She explained that as performance increased within the Express facilities, FLDOT began to implement ramp metering as a means to accelerate performance of the facility, make the roadway safer and ultimately improve mobility. She distinguished Florida from Washington (Central Puget Sound) – not as much of an HOV or HOV-2+ rich history to begin with, so may have made it easier for Florida to convert.

**EAG Comments:** Craig asked the EAG members for their perspectives – and particular questions and issues they think the ERP Members need to cover.

- **Councilman Sonny Putter** of Newcastle synthesized key policy debates that are “be-deviling” he and others – 1) are the conclusions valid – does the data and modeling support those conclusions?; 2) Dual goals -- HOV-2 vis-à-vis HOV-3 – and how to approach that; 3) Financing and bonding mechanisms – how aggressive in bonding (e.g. do you use ‘full faith and credit’ of state or something more conservative).
- **Mayor Suzette Cooke** of Kent said where SR 167 and I-405 meet is a tremendous bottleneck – until there’s a plan for how that can be resolved, may make the HOT lanes concept a non-starter – so wants ERP members to relay experience and recommendations for corridors where there is a major chokepoint at one end. Also mentioned managing expectations – the negative spin that some have put on SR 167 HOT Lanes, so how would ERP Members recommend proceeding in a way that can help transition some of the early public opinion. She also mentioned that the duration of the SR 167 lanes is “fairly short” and it may make a significant difference to bring in I-405 and have a much longer corridor to work with.
- **Mayor Joan McBride** of Kirkland provided Kirkland’s support for express toll lanes on I-405 in her comments. Said wanted ERP Members to understand how strong the support is from Kirkland’s City Council and Transportation Commission. She emphasized that a huge amount of work has already been done on HOT/toll lanes. Kirkland would like to go forward – commented that some of the arguments “are so last-century.” Said Kirkland believes HOT/toll lanes can help with managing resources and traffic flows. Said Kirkland is also open to where the toll revenue is deployed. Wants to see the express toll lanes evolve from ‘segments’ to ‘a system.’ Asked ERP Members to think about what the public outreach plan should be.

- **Mayor David Hill** of Algona noted the HOV-2 vs. the HOV-3 being one of the most “difficult issues” and political stumbling blocks. He stressed the importance of a change in terminology – he talks to many who may not like ‘tolling’ but do like ‘user fees’ and it may be important to use the user-fees terminology. He also pointed to the title of the study (Mayor Cooke and Sue Singer also remarked on this) – “Eastside Corridor” – hard to get south county interested, but if it is recast as a study of I-405/SR 167 corridors for east and south...His perspective is that even if toll revenue only helps with O&M, that is still significant.
- **Councilman Randy Corman** of Renton voiced the city’s support for managed lanes, and commented that when the I-405 Executive Committee was doing the master plan, “managed lanes” had been more of an issue for the future. Now, with gains in technology, “they now look more viable.” Spoke of the need for the EAG to “speak with a consensus and in unison” and wouldn’t want a situation where there is a disconnect, for example, between his jurisdiction and a Bellevue or a Kent or a Kirkland, etc. Said the I-405/SR 167 interchange is a “very sensitive part of this” and an “essential element for success.”
- **Councilman Grant Degginger** of Bellevue said Sonny Putter’s summary of the key issues of occupancy and financing was very good. Spoke of importance of investing in corridor and looking at the types of bonding available. Committed to knowing how this study correlates with national examples.
- **Ron Posthuma** of King County DOT said it would be good to know from ERP Members how an express lane/toll lane corridor might help our area compete for and leverage federal funding – remarked on Congressional discussions of infrastructure bank, the TIGER 1 and 2 competitive programs, and “TIFIA” (Transportation Infrastructure Financing Innovations Act).
- **Bob Poole** added that there has actually been continuity between Presidents Bush and Obama’s administrations in supporting some of these things, such as TIFIA, infrastructure bank, tolling/pricing. Said corridor such as I-405/SR 167 could be “very good candidate” for federal funding especially if the emphasis is multi-modal, things such as BRT are valuable. Said it can be one of the ways the corridor can be more self-supporting on a long-term basis.
- **Councilwoman Claudia Balducci**, Sound Transit Board member, said the transit agencies had raised some issues in a letter that will be provided to the ERP. Said ST and the transit agencies will want to know how toll lanes impact their ingress and egress and direct-access ramps. Said ST has facilities on I-405 that may be financed on condition of HOV only – what happens to those? Said there is a technical issue of how the toll lanes might impact transit agencies’ grant applications and hours-boarding calculations....Also remarked that some of her fellow Bellevue council members have questions, and the ‘Are the conclusions valid’ question is an important one. We need to

clearly understand how the express toll lanes would or could help with GP (general purpose) traffic.

- **Councilwoman Sue Singer**, PSRC Board member, spoke to the “PR aspect” – addressing the pinch-point at SR 167/I-405 would go a long way toward getting help with the SR 167 constituents. Said the group should not dismiss the potential importance of renaming “Eastside Corridor” title for the study. Said the PSRC is supportive of tolling efforts and system tolling studies.

**Brief ERP responses:** Craig thanked the ERP and EAG members for their comments, asked if ERP Members had any final comments or thoughts.

**Bob Poole (ERP):** “In response to Mayor Hill one of the issues you mentioned is reliability of travel times and that question has been studied extensively around the country, in particular Orange County. What people are willing to pay for is the *reliability*; people actually end up overestimating how much time they’re saving; they like knowing how reliable the trip is.”

**Chuck Fuhs (ERP):** “The change from HOV 2+ to HOV 3+ is a difficult one - recognize that historically we have 120 HOV projects out there. Prior to 1987 you could not build an HOV facility that wasn’t 3+ and receive federal funding; we’ve spent a lot of time gravitating to 2+; and now we’re gravitating back. The occupancy issue was there long before pricing came to the table; almost 100% of the HOV projects have changed access, occupancy, hours of operation and/or pricing policies to some degree. DOTs have been flexible and persistent in keeping HOV facilities running properly. The challenging part of this project is thinking about how to address this policy from different angles. How do you communicate the need for flexibility?”

## **VII. Wrap-up**

Craig closed the meeting with some final remarks—there are national, regional and local challenges to express toll lane projects. “You’ve heard some people say the project is going too fast, and others say that we’ve been talking about this for 9 years and need to move forward to achieve a transportation balance.” Craig thanked everyone for their time and invited them to stay after the meeting for informal discussions with the ERP and EAG members.

Meeting Schedule (differs slightly from the original – please make note and/or check the project [web site](#) for current information.

ERP/EAG Meeting #1: Wednesday, September 8th, 9:00 am to 11:00 am (South Bellevue Community Center)

ERP/EAG Meeting #2: Thursday, October 7th, 9:00 am to 11:00 am (Renton City Council)

ERP/EAG Meeting #3: Wednesday, November 10th, 9:00 am to 11:00 am (Kirkland)

## **Adjourn**