

Eastside Corridor Tolling Study - DRAFT

Interagency Working Group Meeting #3 – Meeting Summary

October 20, 2009

9:00 – 12:00 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall

450 110th Ave NE, Bellevue, WA 98004

Interagency Working Group members in attendance:

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| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Doug Jacobson, City of Bothell | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Kim Becklund, City of Bellevue |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Robin Tishmak, City of Tukwila | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Peter Hahn, City of Renton |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Goran Sparrman, City of Bellevue | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Lisa Shafer, King County Metro |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sarah Hayden, Community Transit | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Steve Thomsen, Snohomish County |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Charlie Howard, PSRC | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Daryl Grigsby, City of Kirkland |

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 Communications |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Kim Henry, Eastside Corridor Project Director | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Laura LaBissoniere, Eastside Corridor Communications |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Denise Cieri, Eastside Corridor Deputy Director | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Amy Danberg, Eastside Corridor Communications |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Wendy Taylor, Eastside Corridor Team | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Jennifer Sandberg, Eastside Corridor Communications |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Lesly Chan, Eastside Corridor Team | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Caroline Barnett, Eastside Corridor Team |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Karl Westby, Eastside Corridor Team | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Scott Ladner, Parsons Brinckerhoff |
| | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ed Regan, Wilbur Smith |

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 Interagency Working Group (IWG) members and introduced guest presenters, Ed Regan of Wilbur Smith and Scott Ladner of Parsons Brinckerhoff.

Craig provided an overview of the agenda and explained that the purpose of meeting #3 is to review the study process and public input, discuss initial traffic and revenue results and begin drafting the funding and phasing principles.

Discussion

- Peter Hahn, City of Renton, asked how WSDOT's Active Traffic Management System (ATM) relates to the Eastside Corridor Tolling Study. Are there portions of the corridor that will benefit from the implementation of ATM measures? Should we wait to see how the ATM system performs alone?
- Craig explained that implementation is underway. By 2011, WSDOT will have a 20-mile ATM system in place. This will include variable speed limits, advisory signs and lane control signs. WSDOT is projecting a 30 percent reduction in injuries and accidents. Increasing safety is the number one priority while congestion relief is a secondary benefit. Craig concluded that ATM techniques and tolling are compatible and there is merit to combine these efforts on I-405.

II. Study Recap

Denise Cieri, Eastside Corridor Deputy Project Director, provided a recap of the study charge and range of study options. Denise explained the features of each option.

Study

1. **Study Option #1** consists of primarily funded projects. On I-405, adds a two lane express toll lane system from SR 520 to SR 522 and one lane from SR 522 to I-5. On SR167, adds 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 the 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 is 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, building closer to the master plan. Option 5 also adds a second express toll lane between SR 522 and I-5 and builds one HOT lane on northbound and southbound SR167 between SR 512 and 8th Street E (Stage 6). Option 5 creates a 50+ mile Eastside Corridor managed lane system.

Discussion

- Doug Jacobson, City of Bothell, asked if the SR 522/I-5 interchange will be reconstructed. Wendy said WSDOT is making improvements to the SR 522/I-5 interchange, building a direct access ramp to decrease bottlenecks, and, under Option 5, the improvement must occur in order to construct a second lane.

Transit Workshop

Denise Cieri, Eastside Corridor Deputy Project Director, announced WSDOT recently met with transit agencies to discuss access points.

Lisa Shafer, King County Metro, explained that various transit agencies expressed interest in discussing the Eastside Corridor Tolling Study in detail. The meeting provided the opportunity to identify principles that maximize transit speed and reliability. The group confirmed transit needs to be an integrated component of the entire system. The issues and challenges identified include funding for service and capital costs, engineering constraints, and balancing the tradeoffs for different users.

Lisa Shafer highlighted transit specific operational concerns, such as weaving through traffic to reach the HOV lanes. The key principles identified include maintaining a commitment to transit speed and reliability, integrating frequent access points, maintaining a commitment to HOV lanes, safety, and developing incremental steps to

achieve the overall vision. Lisa concluded that the workshop was an encouraging step and the next meeting of the transit sub-group will continue the dialogue.

Public Outreach

Colleen Gants, Eastside Corridor Communications Manager, provided an overview of public involvement activities including summer festivals, project mailings, public meetings, focus groups, a statistically valid phone survey, and an online survey.

Colleen summarized the results of public comment to date. Key findings reveal that use and understanding of express toll lanes equals support. Congestion relief was cited as the primary rationale by those in favor of express toll lanes. Colleen highlighted two case studies from around the country that showed an increase in public approval after toll implementation. She announced two upcoming public open houses and encouraged the IWG members to attend and to notify others in their jurisdictions.

Discussion

- Craig Stone, WSDOT Toll Division Director, asked if other case studies indicate similar patterns.
- Ed Regan, Wilbur Smith, responded yes. The implementation of express toll lanes in Minnesota and San Diego followed a similar pattern. There was a large shift from 'undecided' to 'in favor,' as the public became more knowledgeable. Ed also provided some background information on the I-15 project in San Diego.

Traffic Performance

Kim Henry, Eastside Corridor Project Director, highlighted projected population growth estimates and emphasized the need to optimize highway system performance. Kim referenced a speed curve graphic to illustrate how congestion reduces highway efficiency.

Kim Henry provided an overview of tools that are currently utilized to manage congestion and explained their inadequacies. He then introduced dynamic pricing and explained how dynamic toll rates enables optimal throughput.

III. Gross Revenue, Traffic and Toll Rates

Ed Regan, Wilbur Smith, provided an overview of the traffic and gross revenue analysis for the Eastside Corridor Tolling Study. The two major factors driving the results were population/employment forecasts and willingness to pay a toll.

Ed Regan highlighted dynamic pricing as a critical component in congestion demand management and shared several national examples of dynamic pricing to demonstrate its effectiveness.

Traffic and Gross Revenue Analysis – System Performance

Karl Westby, Eastside Corridor project team, provided an overview of system performance on I-405. Karl referenced a bar graph and explained that the analysis results reveal tolled lanes perform better than general purpose lanes.

Discussion

- Peter Hahn, City of Renton, asked if the scenarios build upon each other. Karl answered, yes and explained the challenge is identifying all of the data points along such a long corridor. Peter requested delay times for each option.
- Kim Becklund, City of Bellevue, requested a comparison of travel times. She commented the driving community will be able to better relate to a time savings. Karl responded yes, WSDOT can provide that information.
- Daryl Grigsby, City of Kirkland, agreed with Kim and said the Kirkland business community will also want the focus to be on time savings.
- Lisa Shafer, King County Metro, asked for clarification of the time frame studied in the analysis. Karl answered peak morning and afternoon commute times. Lisa asked if transit factors into the model. Karl explained that transit ridership numbers were included in the PSRC model and WSDOT incorporated that data.
- Ed Regan, Wilbur Smith, commented that the graphs indicate better performance with tolling than with added improvements.
- Peter Hahn, City of Renton, asked if the graph implies that Option 4 is the worst. Karl replied no and explained the higher the bar on the graph, the greater the benefit.
- Craig Stone, WSDOT Toll Division Director, said people like the idea of traditional commutes, which is difficult because the Eastside Corridor ties several corridors together. Karl added, people frequently want us to describe time savings but often speed is a more convincing benefit.
- Ed Regan, Wilbur Smith, commented that toll lanes are often misrepresented as lanes that only benefit the rich, but in reality they are used by a variety of people every day.

- Charlie Howard, PSRC, encouraged the group to seriously consider implementing a cap. The revenue impact of a toll cap would be minor.
- Doug Jacobsen, City of Bothell, asked what the price cap is on the SR 167 HOT lanes. Craig answered \$9.00, but said in the last year no one has paid that much.
- Lisa Shafer, King County Metro, asked if the toll would remain constant for drivers entering at SR 167 during little congestion. Ed Regan answered no, the toll zone would cover a section of the corridor and signage would indicate rates for various destinations.
- Denise Cieri, Eastside Corridor Deputy Director, announced there is a separate group charged to develop consistent toll signage and messaging plan. Similar signage will be used on all regional toll lanes.
- The IWG members discussed toll signage and concluded toll rates for several common destinations should be indicated on each sign.
- Lisa Shafer, King County Metro, asked why Option 4 average toll rate jumps from \$4 to \$8. Karl responded that Option 4 transitions to a longer system. Craig agreed with Lisa and said he thinks the reason for this dramatic increase is not intuitive based on the graphic. There was a general consensus among the group that typical commute rates should be highlighted.
- Craig Stone, WSDOT Toll Division Director, summarized the IWG's consensus to implement a cap and asked the group for feedback on implementation. He encouraged the group to consider a visual representation, reasonable toll rates, political climate and media coverage.
- Kim Henry, Eastside Corridor Project Director, referenced the SR 167 cap and said \$10-\$15 would align with this standard.
- Daryl Grigsby, City of Kirkland, said he thought \$12 would be accepted by politicians and the public.
- Goran Sparrman, City of Bellevue, asked what the revenue would be used for. Craig Stone agreed that accountability is critical.
- Ed Regan, Wilbur Smith, said the IWG needs to inform leaders of the benefit of tolls.
- Daryl Grigsby, City of Kirkland, asked how many projects nationally have price caps. Ed Regan replied that caps are typically set at 2 to 3 times the average rate. He added this project is different because of its length.

- Peter Hahn, City of Renton, commented on the fact that the relationship between trip length and price is unclear. He proposed inviting politicians to decide on the cap in an effort to reduce the discussion and determine reasonability.
- Goran Sparrman, City of Bellevue, encouraged the group to identify the minimum. Kim Becklund, City of Bellevue agreed and suggested including a point on the graph where performance is lost.

Revenue Methodology and Preliminary Results

Scott Ladner, Parsons Brinckerhoff, provided an overview of toll financing and revenue generation. Scott referenced a water faucet diagram to demonstrate how net revenue is determined. He then explained the role of bonds in financing tolled projects.

Kim Henry, Eastside Corridor Project Director, reviewed the capital costs, funds needed, range of net bond proceeds and available and needed funds.

Discussion

- Doug Jacobson, City of Bothell, requested a differentiation in the size of the deductions on the water faucet diagram (included in the PowerPoint presentation) to indicate the magnitude of cost.
- There were several questions related to the financing options and overall cost. The IWG members concluded that funds available/needed should be clearly identified.
- Goran Sparrman, City of Bellevue, emphasized the need to inform the legislature that tolls are necessary to make improvements.

Craig Stone, WSDOT Toll Division Director, summarized the group's key observation; toll lanes relieve congestion better than general purpose lanes, toll rates should be determined by supply and demand, and options 1 and 2 could be fully financed through toll revenues. Craig asked the group to share any comments.

Discussion

- Doug Jacobson, City of Bothell, asked if people are diverted to other roadways and non-peak periods when roads are tolled. Ed Regan explained how the proposed tolls on I-405 are a choice – that there will still be general purpose lanes for drivers not wishing to pay a toll to use.
- There was discussion among the group about how toll lanes manage demand. Ed Regan referenced the SR 91 project in Southern California as an example. With two toll lanes and three non tolled lanes, the toll lanes will carry 45 percent of the vehicles during peak commute times.
- Doug Jacobson, City of Bothell, encouraged the project team to utilize specific examples to showcase the benefits of express toll lanes.
- Charlie Howard, PSRC, commented that PSRC's Transportation 2040 study revealed public opposition to tolls.

V. Draft Principles

Denise Cieri, Eastside Corridor Deputy Project Director, addressed the funding and phasing principles and requested feedback from the group. She asked the IWG members to discuss their concerns with their respective local officials.

Discussion

- Charlie Howard, PSRC, advised the project team to focus on congestion management and not theoretical revenue generation.
- Daryl Grigsby, City of Kirkland, inquired about examples that show a shift from HOV to SOV after the implementation of express toll lanes. Ed Regan responded that case studies actually show an increase in carpooling and suggested indicating a price increases the value of carpooling.
- Charlie Howard, PSRC, encouraged the project team to emphasize that there are currently 10 failing HOV segments in the region, and we need to identify a solution.
- Charlie Howard, PSRC, said it would be useful to integrate a cost benefit analysis.

VI. Wrap Up

Craig thanked the group for their input and encouraged the IWG members to submit specific comments on behalf of their jurisdiction or agency.

Adjourn