

Eastside Corridor Tolling Study

Interagency Working Group Meeting #4 – Meeting Summary

December 3, 2009

9:00 – 12:00 p.m.

Kent Commons

525 4th Avenue North, Kent, WA 98032

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"/> Bobann Fogard, Snohomish County | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Peter Hahn, City of Renton |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Pete Jilek, FHWA | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Lisa Shafer, King County Metro |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Mark Bandy, WSDOT | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Brian Ziegler, Pierce County |
| | <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"/> Bruce Brown, PRR |
| <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"/> Karl Westby, Eastside Corridor
Team | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Caroline Barnett, Eastside Corridor Team |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Colleen Gants, Eastside Corridor
Communications | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Josh Posthuma, Parsons Brinckerhoff |

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

Craig Stone, WSDOT Toll Division Director, welcomed the Interagency Working Group (IWG) members and provided an overview of the agenda. He explained the purpose of meeting #4 is to present a recap of the public outreach process, review traffic analysis and revenue results; and to finalize the study principles.

Craig provided an overview of the study charge, draft principles, and range of study options.

Discussion

Brian Ziegler, Pierce County, asked what percentage of transportation projects are financed by tolls versus publically financed. Colleen Gants, Eastside Corridor Communications Lead, responded that question will be covered during the financing portion of the meeting.

II. Public Outreach

Colleen Gants, Eastside Corridor Communications Lead, introduced Bruce Brown, Certified Research Director with PRR. Bruce gave an overview of the public outreach process, highlighting the research component.

Bruce Brown announced that WSDOT conducted a variety of outreach efforts including; summer festivals, comment forms, email correspondence, postcard mailings, five public meetings, an online survey, a statistically valid phone survey, and four focus groups.

The research results indicated several key market segments. While some participants reported opposition, the majority were supportive of express toll lanes on I-405. SR 167 HOT lane users were particularly supportive of extending toll lanes to I-405 to alleviate congestion. Factors that were most predictive of support included previous use, experience of daily congestion and younger age.

Discussion

- Peter Hahn, City of Renton, asked if the “possibly” category is equivalent to undecided. Bruce Brown, PRR, responded this is a conservative label and indicates the need for more information.
- There were a few additional clarification questions about the categories and results.

- Peter Hahn, City of Renton, commented that he experienced an initial negative reaction to the SR 167 HOT lanes because the process seemed confusing and he didn't want to pay. Bruce Brown, PRR, added we heard similar reactions in the focus groups, but as people learn about the system, their support increases.
- Kim Becklund, City of Bellevue, said the travel times signs will show the value and approval ratings will increase when people see their time savings. Bruce Brown, PRR, responded focus group participants indicated they wanted to know that information. Craig Stone, WSDOT Toll Division Director, added in San Diego that issue has been debated because the time savings often creates a skewed perception.
- Brian Ziegler, Pierce County, commented the value is gaining a stress free driving experience.
- Peter Hahn, City of Renton, commented the inconvenience of getting a transponder could be alleviated by providing free transponders. Bruce Brown, PRR, said that in the focus groups some mentioned confusion regarding the process of getting a transponder, but this was not a major impediment. Craig Stone, WSDOT, added there will be a large education and marketing program for the SR 520 project. We need to also start thinking about market penetration.
- Mark Bandy, WSDOT, made an analogy to purchasing songs. He explained that although he was initially opposed to the idea, there are occasions when he does it. He asked if any parallels have been drawn with the music industry. Bruce Brown, PRR, responded this is an interesting area to investigate. Our research has not looked at this.
- Lisa Shafer, King County Metro, commented this is also interesting as transit agencies are moving toward using Orca cards.

III. Traffic Results

Karl Westby, Eastside Corridor Team, presented traffic analysis results for the five study options. Karl explained there are three major factors driving the results; population and employment forecasts, willingness to pay and existing traffic volumes.

Karl Westby explained that the findings show express toll lanes will divert traffic from local streets to I-405. He shared several examples to demonstrate how congestion on local arterials will be improved. Karl announced sensitivity tests were also conducted to show the implications of a 2+ HOV system. The results show higher toll rates and lower revenue projections.

Discussion

- Kim Becklund, City of Bellevue, noted there is a significant increase in price for Option 4. The reason should be explained on the graph.
- Doug Jacobson, City of Bothell, said the graph suggests we should jump straight to Option 5. What are the benefits of the others? Karl responded, although there are greater benefits, the cost is much higher.
- There was discussion about the length of the green line under Options 3 & 4. The consensus was a footnote should be included to indicate Option 4 adds an express toll lane and provides the opportunity to take a longer trip.
- There was discussion about the difference in the graphs for Options 4 & 5. Karl Westby, Eastside Corridor Team, explained that under Option 5 more people are making longer trips. Craig Stone asked if this means people are being priced out of the market. Karl responded yes, not as many short trips are being made.

Diversion

- Doug Jacobson, City of Bothell requested to see an example of a route north of Kirkland.
- Craig Stone, WSDOT, commented there is an immediate assumption that people will use other routes to avoid paying a toll. The diversion information is useful. He requested an example from the southern portion of the corridor.
- Peter Hahn, City of Renton, requested that the team include a slide explaining the benefits specific to transit operations.
- Kim Becklund, City of Bellevue, asked if there are safety benefits that can be included to help gain support from the Legislature. Karl Westby responded our analysis shows there are less accidents when traffic is free flowing. Todd Merkens, WSDOT, added there is no statistical difference on SR 167 after implementation but there was a dramatic decrease in accidents since the

opening of HOT lanes on SR 394 in Minneapolis.

Sensitivity Model

- Brian Ziegler, Pierce County, commented there is only a 10% difference between the two rates. What is the sensitivity of the model? Karl Westby, Eastside Corridor Team, responded the peak toll rates do change substantially.
- Doug Jacobson, City of Bothell, suggested the toll caps be shown on a different slide. He asked the team to add a label for Option 1, including a footnote to indicate which area in Bothell the study covers.
- Peter Hahn, City of Renton, asked if the difference in revenue could be added to the graph on slide 20. Kim Henry, WSDOT, added we could also add bullet points with benefit statements. Peter Hahn responded this information might be more persuasive than the rate difference.

Discussion

- Craig Stone, WSDOT, asked the group to consider the 3+ vs. 2+ debate from a policy perspective. He explained it has proved difficult nationally to implement 3+ HOV lanes. Kim Becklund, City of Bellevue, commented that the diminishing returns of a 2+ system would be overwhelming. Mark Bandy, WSDOT, added the increased risk of a 2+ system might also impact the financing options.
- Craig Stone, WSDOT, asked for the IWG member's input on how to incorporate their feedback on this issue in the final report.
- Kim Becklund, City of Bellevue, asked the project team to contact elected officials around the country who have recently been involved in a transition from 2+ to 3+, requesting anecdotal information and advice.
- Peter Hahn, City of Renton, said we should start with a description of why this is an important subject and clearly articulate the consequences. A one page description would provide necessary context.
- Daryl Grigsby, City of Kirkland, asked what percentage of HOV lanes nationally are 2+. Craig Stone responded 75 percent.

- Peter Hahn, City of Renton, asked for the baseline and suggested showing a dotted line or bar to compare the improvements. Craig Stone, WSDOT, thanked him and responded we heard that comment from Bellevue City Council as well.
- Bobann Fogard, Snohomish County, recommended comparing the delta between the investments and alternatives. Peter Hahn, City of Renton, agreed and added, the first three graphs look identical which doesn't help advocate for Option 3.
- Kim Becklund, City of Bellevue, said if the debate centers on Option 4 versus the rest we'll need to clearly distinguish the differences between the alternatives.
- Doug Jacobson, City of Bothell, commented the symbol for interchange appears in the legend but isn't shown anywhere on the maps. Wendy Taylor, Eastside Corridor Team, responded Option 5 includes an interchange improvement.
- Doug Jacobson, City of Bothell, asked for the definition of free flow. Karl Westby, Eastside Corridor Team, responded greater than 45 mph.
- Lisa Shafer, King County Metro, asked what time frame is shown. Karl Westby, Eastside Corridor Team, answered weekday mornings.

IV. Funding and Bonding

Denise Cieri introduced Josh Posthuma with Parsons Brinckerhoff and explained Josh would present an overview of the revenue results and sensitivity analysis

Josh Posthuma explained that bonding assumptions are determined by the Office of State Treasury and consider a range of funding options including non-recourse and state-backed financing. He provided an overview of the financing scenarios for each option.

Discussion

- Doug Jacobson, City of Bothell, requested the same terminology be used on the slide and in the presentation to ensure clarity.
- Kim Henry, WSDOT, explained there is not as much flexibility to adjust the rates because use of the lanes is a choice for the user, creating a higher risk scenario.

- Kim Becklund, City of Bellevue, asked the project team to include a few other projects to highlight during the EAG meeting so the elected officials can see the range in coverage ratio.
- Peter Hahn, City of Renton, asked if the movement from 3+ to 2+ produces half the bond proceeds. Josh Posthuma, Parsons Brickerhoff, responded yes, only under study Option 1.
- Doug Jacobson, City of Bothell, announced policy makers may want to consider an option in between Options 2 and 3.
- Craig Stone, WSDOT asked if more research has been conducted on how other national projects were funded. Josh Posthuma, Parsons Brinckerhoff, responded that SR 91 and the Virginia Beltway project were both funding privately. Craig encouraged the team to consider that issue before the EAG meeting.
- Peter Hahn, City of Renton, asked how the uncertainty of public perception is reflected in the funding range. Josh Posthuma, Parsons Brickerhoff, explained that the low end assumes a lot of people won't use the system. The range reflects the marketability success. Karl Westby, Eastside Corridor Team, added all of the traffic analysis data is based on high usage.
- Kim Henry, WSDOT, said we've heard a lot of comments about starting with Option 1 and moving incrementally toward Option 4.
- Kim Becklund, City of Bellevue, asked if the project team is looking for approval from elected officials to implement incrementally. Denise Cieri, WSDOT, responded yes because it would provide the opportunity to test the models and decrease any risk factors.
- Mark Bandy, WSDOT, warned the team to be strategic and deliberate with the timeline because an incremental approach could take a long time to implement.
- Craig Stone, WSDOT, added this approach could help with the funding piece.
- Kim Becklund, asked the team to also share what would happen if nothing was done as a baseline for comparison.

Finalize Principles

Kim Henry, Eastside Corridor Project Director, provided an overview of the draft study principles reviewed at meeting 3. Kim Henry and Denise Cieri led a discussion of the principles, requesting feedback from the IWG members. The group edited the list to formulate the revised principles below.

Combined Principles

The Eastside Corridor (I-405/SR 167) express toll lane vision is to optimize freeway lane performance and manage congestion.

Performance

1. Move more people
2. Manage corridor speeds and reliability to free flow conditions
 - a. May require change in minimum HOV occupancy.
3. Prioritize and accommodate transit performance and HOV users
4. Minimize diversion to arterials or neighborhood streets.
5. Improve mobility for freight and drivers in all lanes.

Funding

6. Retain tolling revenue in the Eastside Corridor.
7. Secure financing with fair terms, similar to other corridors. – Leverage traditional resources.
8. Except transit and carpools from tolls. Prioritization of funds. Monitor national/regional trends/ gain experience in regards to funding.

Implementation

9. Implement with phased (Looking for a system improvement with) approach, logical segments, and building upon funded projects.
 - a. Integrates with regional tolling system and long range regional planning
 - b. Sensitivity to construction phasing on regional level.

Public Outreach

10. Grow awareness, experience and support by engaging the public, local agencies and elected officials.

11. Make tolling operations more mainstream.

V. Wrap Up

Craig Stone thanked the group for their participation in the final IWG meeting and input in the Eastside Corridor Tolling Study process.

Adjourn