

Eastside Corridor Tolling Study - DRAFT

Interagency Working Group Meeting #2 – Meeting Summary

July 23, 2009

9:00 – 11:30 a.m.

Renton City Hall, Council Chambers

1055 S Grady Way, Renton, WA 98057-3232

Interagency Working Group members in attendance:

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|---|---|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Mark Bandy, WSDOT | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Daryl Grigsby, City of Kirkland |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Carol Thompson, Community Transit | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Lisa Shafer, King County Metro |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Goran Sparrman, City of Bellevue | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Peter Hahn, City of Renton |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Brian Ziegler, Pierce County | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Bob Giberson, City of Tukwila |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Charlie Howard, PSRC | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Kim Becklund, PSRC |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Bobann Fogard, Snohomish County | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Steve Mullen, City of Kent |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Greg Walker, Sound Transit | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> David Hull, King County Metro |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> David Beal, Sound Transit | |

Eastside Corridor Tolling Study Project Team

- | | |
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| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Craig Stone, WSDOT | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Colleen Gants, 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 Director | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Patrick Conrad, I-405 Communications |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Wendy Taylor, I-405 Team | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Jennifer Sandberg, I-405 Communications |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Lesly Chan, I-405 Team | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Caroline Barnett, I-405 Team |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Karl Westby, I-405 Team | |

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, Director, WSDOT Toll Division, welcomed the Interagency Working Group (IWG) 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: 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. How do express toll lanes work?

Craig introduced a tolling video and explained its purpose is to show how express toll lanes work. He requested that IWG members provide input on the video before being shown at public meetings in August.

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

Discussion

- At one point during the video a car pulls in front of a bus. The scene bothered the representative from the transit agency.
- Several members engaged in a discussion about the traffic curve graphic. While some thought the graphic was too detailed, others thought it provided a clear representation of the system.
- When the driver exits the HOT lane, there should be an announcement that she is crossing the dashed white line.
- What happens if you need to cross the double white line? Is it illegal? I-405 Deputy Director Denise Cieri answered there are many signs along the SR 167 corridor that read it is illegal to cross the double white line. This is a state law. Group members said it would be beneficial to also have clear signage that says crossing the dashed white line is legal.

- If there is enough space, will there be a solid barrier separating express lanes from the general purpose lanes? WSDOT's Craig Stone responded that buffers are being explored and a 4-foot buffer is the standard.
- Revenue generation was not emphasized enough in the video. This should be highlighted.
- Discuss other regional and state-wide tolling studies to show tolling is being considered on other projects.
- Is there a way to find the access points that are frequently used? Karl Westby, with the I-405 Project Team, answered yes, preliminary work has shown us where vehicles enter and exit. The challenge is to balance access points with maintaining traffic flow.
- Transit agencies are concerned express toll lanes will provide limited access points and could negatively impact transit ridership.
- The use of the drivers named "Jesse and Bob" in the video was effective.
- There are too many terms being used, i.e. HOT lanes, and express toll lanes. We need to simplify the terminology so people don't get confused.
- The inefficiency of congestion should be emphasized. City Council members and the public need to understand that the system is not operating at optimal efficiency and this is the ultimate goal in implementing an express toll lane system.
- Who is the primary audience for the video? I-405's communications lead, Colleen Gants answered that the audience is largely the general public and the video will be showed at open houses and available on the web site.

III. HOV performance and funding

Karly Westby, with the I-405 project team, provided an overview of current HOV performance on I-405. He explained that both 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.

David Hull, with King County Metro, concurred, 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,

access points are the biggest concern and should be carefully designed.

Discussion

- Why are transit agencies so concerned about access points if their routes are fixed? David Hull answered routes do change occasionally and Metro wants to ensure the design will accommodate current bus routes.
- Does FHWA have a specific policy for accessing toll lanes, similar to their policy for accessing highways? Denise Cieri, Eastside Corridor Tolling Deputy Project Director, responded FHWA is moving toward a more flexible policy on the definition of HOV lanes and access points. She added they will be very involved as the team develops the design guidelines.

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.

Discussion

- Has WSDOT tested the math behind this study? Karl Westby answered that variable pricing allows management of the express toll lane, therefore avoiding the breakdown which leads to loss of efficiency.
- Will the general purpose lanes operate at 100% capacity or only the HOT lanes? Karl Westby answered that we can only determine the HOT lane efficiency. The general purpose lanes will likely see some improvement as well. IWG members advised the team to be clear when communicating this to the public.
- The value of time is compelling and should be incorporated into this explanation.
- Other suggestions included calculating the number of people that could be moved on I-405, not just the number of vehicles.

- Use a speedometer as a graphic to accompany the flow diagram, because people can relate to speeds.
- The speed curve model is effective.
- Emphasize how improved management of the facility saves on the need for capital investment. WSDOT's Craig Stone added that sustainability is an important issue and person throughput is another good point to include.
- Craig Stone asked the IWG members if the 2+/3+ HOV operations comparison chart was clear. The group responded overwhelmingly no, it is not.
 - The chart implies 2+ provides better results than 3+.
 - There was one recommendation to show real time. Craig added the chart could begin in 1980 and show the progression of the HOV system over time.
 - From a transit perspective, 3+ is better.
 - Show speed degrading over time.
 - Congestion in the general purpose lanes also impacts HOV performance. The HOV lanes come to a halt when vehicles are merging.
 - There are flaws with 2+ and 3+ systems. WSDOT's Craig Stone added that there is no easy solution. It is a complex policy question.
 - Access points need to allow traffic flow in and out of communities along I-405.

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

Kim Henry and Denise Cieri introduced five preliminary study options, ranging from the most basic to complex systems. Kim Henry asked the group to provide feedback and identify any gaps.

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 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.

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

- Access points are a critical issue. Limited access shifts the HOT lane purpose and benefits longer trips. This is not necessarily bad, but the system needs to also accommodate bus rapid transit. Frequent stops require transit to enter and exit and there needs to be flexibility in using the system.
- Also consider local transit operations, these routes are more likely to change over time. WSDOT's Kim Henry responded that we're trying to strike a balance and he emphasized that access points will be subject to further discussion and analysis.

- King County Metro requested an opportunity to discuss technical aspects in more detail.
- Why doesn't the study extend to SR 512? WSDOT's Craig Stone answered that the legislative proviso specifically requested that WSDOT study I-405. He added that State Transportation Secretary, Paula Hammond would like to consider expanding the principles found in the study to the rest of the eastside corridor.
- Is there a regional policy in place to transition from an HOV system to another type of managed lane system? How does this compare to state policies? WSDOT's Craig Stone answered the study timing is good because it will provide data that will then be captured in the regional plan.
- Will costs be identified for each option at the public meetings? Kim Henry answered no.

VIII. Public Outreach Planning

Colleen Gants, I-405 communications lead announced that several public outreach activities are being conducted to engage local communities in the study. Outreach events include briefings, summer fairs and festivals 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.

IX. Wrap-up

WSDOT's Craig Stone summarized a few key themes that arose during the meeting, including person throughput, access points, sustainability, and the issues surrounding the 2+/3+ debate.

Round Table Discussion

Craig Stone asked the group to share any questions, issues, or areas of concern.

- Daryl Grigsby, with the City of Kirkland said that the information was not too technical for the Executive Advisory Group (EAG) members and that optimal speed is a concept they need to understand well. He complimented the video and requested an electronic version of the study options slide.

- Peter Hahn with the City of Renton encouraged the IWG members to brief their elected officials on the presentation before the EAG meeting.
- Lisa Shafer with King County Metro requested the EAG meeting summaries and study options.
- Brian Ziegler with Pierce County agreed that the presentation was not too technical for the elected officials.

Colleen Gants with WSDOT asked attendees to pick up open house “save-the-dates” forms to share with their communities.

Craig Stone thanked the group for their input and announced the next Interagency Working Group Meeting date has not yet been scheduled.

Adjourn