



# Corridor Program

## Summary

### I-405/SR 167 Executive Advisory Group Meeting

Tuesday, April 26, 2016  
Kirkland Heritage Hall  
9 – 11 a.m.

#### Executive Advisory Group members in attendance:

- Deputy Mayor Jay Arnold, City of Kirkland
- Rep. Judy Clibborn, Washington State Legislature
- Councilmember Randy Corman, City of Renton
- Mayor Rich Crispo, City of Newcastle
- Deputy Mayor Davina Duerr, City of Bothell
- Councilmember Claude DaCorsi, City of Auburn
- Ken Feldman, Federal Transit Administration
- Reema Griffith, Washington State Transportation Commission
- Rep. Mark Hargrove, Washington State Legislature
- Rep. Mark Harmsworth, Washington State Legislature
- Sen. Bob Hasegawa, Washington State Legislature
- Peter Heffernan, King County Department of Transportation, on behalf of Harold Taniguchi
- Mayor David Hill, City of Algona
- Rep. Patricia Kuderer, Washington State Legislature
- Sen. Marko Liias, Washington State Legislature
- Rep. Chad Magendanz, Washington State Legislature
- Daniel Mathis, Federal Highway Administration
- Todd Morrow, Community Transit, on behalf of CEO Emmett Heath
- Rep. Luis Moscoso, Washington State Legislature
- Councilmember Kevin Wallace, City of Bellevue
- Lacey Jane Wolfe, senior transportation planner, on behalf of Mayor Suzette Cooke, City of Kent

#### Presenters and I-405/SR 167 Project Team and Staff in attendance:

- Kim Becklund, King County Metro
- Anne Broache, WSDOT Communications
- Allison Camden, WSDOT Director of Intergovernmental and Tribal Relations,
- Amy Danberg, WSDOT Communications
- Lorena Eng, WSDOT Northwest Region Administrator
- Lars Erikson, WSDOT Director of Communications
- Kim Henry, WSDOT I-405/SR 167 Project Director
- Ric Ilgenfritz, Sound Transit
- Erica Jacobs, King County
- Roger Millar, WSDOT Acting Transportation Secretary
- Caitlin Morris, WSDOT Communications
- Emily Pace, WSDOT Communications
- Patty Rubstello, WSDOT Assistant Secretary, Toll Division
- Amy Scarton, WSDOT Assistant Secretary, Community and Economic Development, WSDOT
- Lisa Shafer, King County Metro
- Charla Skaggs, WSDOT Communications
- Wendy Taylor, WSDOT I-405/SR 167 Project Team
- Karl Westby, WSDOT I-405/SR 167 Project Team



# Corridor Program

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 a 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 Introductions

Acting Secretary of Transportation Roger Millar welcomed the I-405/SR 167 Executive Advisory Group, highlighted its new members and reviewed the agenda. He reminded the meeting participants to emphasize context, perspective and partnerships. Acting Secretary Millar closed with the statement that more than a million people are expected to move to the Puget Sound region in the next 25 years, which makes it important to pursue the next elements of the I-405/SR 167 Master Plan.

## II. I-405 Master Plan Update and Six-Month Express Toll Lanes Report-Out

Kim Henry, I-405/SR 167 Project Director, provided an overview of the I-405 Master Plan to set the context for the day's discussion. He reminded the group that the purpose of the I-405 Master Plan was not to eliminate congestion but to manage it through multimodal improvements, including adding two new lanes to I-405, bus rapid transit and a system of managed lanes. He presented statistics on regional growth expected in the I-405 corridor and ongoing increases in regional traffic congestion.

Henry noted that in the past year, delays for I-5 travelers have increased at much faster rate, while I-405 delays have begun to flatten out, arguably because of a series of highway capacity improvements made in the corridor since 2007. He concluded with an update on progress toward meeting the Master Plan's multimodal goals.

Patty Rubstello, WSDOT Toll Division Assistant Secretary, then presented a six-month performance update for the I-405 express toll lanes. She reminded the group that the express toll lanes were created in response to increased congestion along the corridor and over-crowded HOV lanes.

The first six months of traffic data show high express toll lane usage, faster speeds and reduced travel times, Rubstello noted. She shared an infographic with a series of statistics about express toll lane users and trips, including 7.5 million trips made in the express toll lanes, of which 5.1 million were tolled trips. She noted that in the past three months, express toll lane users have experienced an average of 10 minutes of travel time savings in the southbound direction and 13 minutes in the northbound direction as compared to the previous HOV lane. In addition, general purpose lane users are generally seeing improvements in their commutes, except on northbound I-405 between SR 522 and I-5 in Lynnwood, where challenges continue. The general purpose lanes experience two to four minutes faster commutes in the southbound direction. In the remaining section of northbound I-405 between Bellevue and Bothell, commutes are up to six minutes faster, however, between SR 522 and I-5 in Lynnwood some commutes are three minutes slower. Rubstello described early challenges in express toll lanes implementation, including capacity issues between Bothell and Lynnwood and the need for adjustments to express toll lane access.

Rubstello then presented more detailed data on roadway speeds and volumes. According to the six-month data, peak period speeds in both the general purpose and express toll lanes have improved overall



## Corridor Program

since before implementation. In addition, greater volumes of vehicles are moving through the lanes at almost every spot of the corridor, and, after toll algorithm adjustments in the first three months, express toll lanes are now exceeding their performance standard of 45 miles per hour, 90 percent of the time.

Rubstello also presented early findings from a recent *Good To Go!* customer survey, indicating that express toll lane users have a good understanding of how the lanes work, and the majority are satisfied with having the option to use the lanes. Overall, over the first six months, the express toll lanes have been meeting their objectives to increase speed and reliability, cover their operating costs, minimize effects on local streets, and increase transit and vanpool ridership.

Henry then went into more depth about how the express toll lanes have affected the general purpose lanes by presenting experiences on sample northbound and southbound commutes. He explained that congestion differs greatly by the type of trip a driver is making, including when and where they travel. He noted that some trips have experienced improved congestion levels in the general purpose lanes since the express toll lanes opened, some have worse experiences, and many continue to have similar experiences.

Rubstello described a series of completed and planned adjustments that WSDOT is making to the express toll lanes to further improve traffic flow. Henry then detailed longer-term plans for the corridor, starting with the legislatively-authorized future projects under evaluation for the Bellevue to Lynnwood section of I-405. He concluded with an overview of the next major funded projects, including the Renton to Bellevue Widening and Express Toll Lanes Project and the I-405/SR 167 Direct Connector project.

### **III. Eastside Rail Corridor Regional trail and WSDOT I-405 Renton to Bellevue Project Coordination**

Erica Jacobs, King County project manager for the Eastside Rail Corridor Regional Trail, provided the group with an update on the trail Master Plan process, including its expected usage, key segment locations, design alternatives under consideration and estimated costs. She started with an overview of the corridor, including its ownership structure. She explained that the draft Master Plan and Environmental Impact Statement document was released for public comment earlier this year and is expected to be adopted by the King County Council this fall.

Jacobs reviewed the expected projected schedule for the next eight years, noting particular areas where WSDOT and King County have opportunities to collaborate. One area is the “Wilburton gap,” in which WSDOT previously agreed to rebuild a bridge over I-405 that will ultimately connect segments of the ERC trail. Additionally, WSDOT and King County plan to coordinate on plans for the Lake Washington Loop Trail, which will need to be relocated as a part of the I-405 Renton to Bellevue Widening and Express Toll Lanes project. Jacobs concluded by outlining the next steps for interagency collaboration, including a planned technical workshop in early June to discuss plans for the new Wilburton bridge.

### **IV. King County Metro's Long-Range Vision**

Kim Becklund, King County Metro Strategic Partnerships Advisor, and Lisa Shafer, King County senior transportation planner presented King County Metro's long-range transit plan, which extends to 2040 and is currently in a public comment period. Becklund said King County's goals include reducing emissions,



## Corridor Program

adding more transit capacity, ensuring the transit system is integrated, providing reliable travel time travel, ensuring that low-income and minority areas are able to access frequent transit service.

Becklund explained that the vision for the 2040 service network includes frequent service, express service and local service. The long range plan also includes coordinating with WSDOT on the I-405 corridor. Shafer noted that transit and vanpool ridership is increasing along the corridor, including 10% growth over the past year. She explained that since I-405 express toll lanes opened, travel times for bus routes that use the lanes have improved by an average of 2-10 minutes. Shafer closed by noting that King County Metro's vision for I-405 includes connections with bus rapid transit and other future services along the corridor, multimodal hubs and access improvements, including park-and-ride expansions.

### V. Draft ST3 Plan

Sound Transit Executive Director Ric Ilgenfritz provided an update of the draft Sound Transit 3 proposal, which will appear on the ballot in fall 2016 and is currently in a public comment period. He explained that Sound Transit's goal is to continue to build transit, while anticipating the one million people headed to the area. The draft ST3 proposal is a 25-year program that envisions a 112-mile light rail system, as well as Bus Rapid Transit and Sounder commuter rail throughout the region.

The draft ST3 plan envisions a Bus Rapid Transit system that would take riders from Lynnwood to Burien along I-405, Ilgenfritz said. The system would use a combination of high-occupancy toll lanes, HOV lanes, bus-only lanes, general purpose lanes and transit shoulders. The draft ST3 timeline includes implementation of I-405 Bus Rapid Transit between 2019 and 2024, making it available to riders before the new ST2 Light Rail stations, Ilgenfritz noted.

### VI. Executive Advisory Group Discussion

Secretary Millar facilitated a discussion among the Executive Advisory Group members.

Sen. Marko Liias asked if the recently-funded future projects along the north section I-405 have undergone the practical solutions process.

Kim Henry explained that WSDOT is still applying practical solutions to the projects' designs. The I-405 Bellevue to Lynnwood Widening and Express Toll Lanes project's cost savings were a result of design modifications that avoided difficult design areas. While those modifications aided the program in avoiding initial costs, now WSDOT has to address those difficult design areas within these north-end projects.

Sen. Liias asked Henry to provide a timeline for the north-end I-405 projects.

Henry replied that the I-405 project team is currently working on a timeline and plans to report on next steps at the Joint Transportation Committee meeting in July.

Sen. Liias then asked Ric Ilgenfritz what the projected travel time is for I-405 Bus Rapid Transit for particular trips.

Ilgenfritz explained that from Lynnwood to Bellevue would take roughly 35 to 40 minutes.

Rep. Mark Harmsworth asked for an update on WSDOT's current plan to address tolling and billing issues.



## Corridor Program

Acting Secretary Millar outlined WSDOT's recent issues with its tolling customer service vendor. He noted that 6.4 million tolls had been processed, and of those transactions, 8,000 pay-by-plate bills were sent out late. He said WSDOT has reached out to everyone affected and given them six months to pay the toll, as well as the option to temporarily enter the *Good To Go!* system to pay online. He also said WSDOT will be releasing a Request for Proposal later this year to start a competitive process for a new customer service center vendor.

Newcastle Mayor Rich Crispo asked King County if the Eastside Rail Corridor easements would impact Puget Sound Energy.

Erica Jacobs replied that the Corridor would still be available to Puget Sound Energy and that King County is working with Sound Transit and PSE to understand all of the potential and planned uses for the corridor.

Mayor Crispo also remarked that the group has been talking about bus routes and asked what the agencies at the table are doing to incentivize people to get out of their cars.

Lisa Shafer and Kim Becklund replied that King County's long-range vision is a mix of transit service types and multiple ways to access transit hubs. They also described existing incentive programs, including a regional mobility grant focused on I-405 that works with residents and students to explore their transportation options.

Ilgenfritz added that Sound Transit is trying to build and expand accessibility to transit hubs.

Mayor Crispo encouraged the transit agencies to consider the transit needs of people who live farther east of the I-405 Corridor and may not have easy access to the planned transit projects along the north-south corridor. He cautioned that voters will not support a package that does not give them any benefit.

Ilgenfritz encouraged feedback of this sort on the ST3 package.

Rep. Luis Moscoso, who represents the north end of the I-405 corridor where congestion challenges persist, asked for assistance on how to explain the I-405 express toll lanes. He noted that people often ask him why they are paying additional tolls for a road they feel they've already paid for in other ways.

Acting Secretary Millar explained that the I-405 express toll lanes represent a market-based solution to give people options along the corridor. He noted that existing revenue sources are not enough to support the corridor's needs.

Rep. Moscoso commented that areas within his constituency are the fastest growing parts of Washington, and that no new transportation infrastructure is proposed there. He expressed the need to address these issues for his constituents.

Bellevue Councilmember Kevin Wallace said he enjoyed having the opportunity to see the different agencies present side by side. Observing that each agency's transportation plan mentions park-and-rides lots, he asked if there is there an overarching entity that oversees this infrastructure.

Kim Becklund and Lisa Shafer responded Sound Transit, King County Metro and WSDOT should work together to integrate, plan and coordinate their facilities. Ilgenfritz added that the region currently has a patchwork of park-and-rides maintained by different agencies and with different structures. He said Sound Transit has advantages because they own their own facilities. He added that Sound Transit has also



## Corridor Program

created pilot programs—for example, for park-and-ride permitting and reservation services—and sharing their findings with other transit agencies.

Councilmember Wallace noted that he sees a hole in the park-and-ride system and called for an agency that ultimately oversees them—a “park-and-ride czar.” He also noted that he sees an opportunity for more collaboration between WSDOT and Sound Transit regarding I-405 Bus Rapid Transit. He called out certain BRT stations, including North 8th Street in Renton and others in South Bellevue that appeared in WSDOT’s plans but not in ST3. He yielded to Renton Councilmember Randy Corman to expand upon these concerns.

Councilmember Corman voiced Renton’s concerns about ST3’s current plans for I-405 Bus Rapid Transit. He noted that a number of stops proposed years ago in the I-405 Master Plan are not in the current plan and said he believes the original vision of I-405 BRT is being eroded. He also noted that the City of Renton built its own park-and-ride and leased it to King County Metro. He said he is currently facing a strong uprising of people asking why Renton does not get Light Rail.

Kirkland Deputy Mayor Jay Arnold asked if there is a plan to increase express toll lane access between Northeast 85th Street and Northeast 70th Place.

Henry answered that WSDOT will be looking into that area as a part of an auxiliary lane project that may start next year.

Bothell Deputy Mayor Davina Duerr expressed concerns about traffic congestion in the north end of I-405 asked Henry when WSDOT will begin improvements.

Henry answered that WSDOT is actively working on projects in that area, including a hard shoulder running along northbound I-405 between Bothell and Lynnwood.

Deputy Mayor Duerr voiced concern that the north end congestion has negative impacts on many commuters to the University of Washington’s Bothell campus. She asked if WSDOT distinguishes performance differences between tolled lanes and general purpose lanes.

Toll Division Assistant Secretary Patty Rubstello responded that WSDOT is working on analyzing individual trips to get a clearer picture of what’s happening along the corridor. She noted that express toll lane trips have seen improvements, but drivers in the general purpose lanes have a variety of experiences. She noted that higher traffic volumes are traveling through the corridor, but congestion is occurring in the section where no new capacity was added between Bothell and Lynnwood.

Rep. Mark Hargrove noted that he works in the tech sector, which seeks disruptive technology. He asked what the agencies are doing to anticipate future disruptive technologies, such as autonomous vehicles. He also questioned whether transit is a convenient option for most people and observed that he has not seen alternatives to light rail if ST3 does not pass.

Secretary Millar replied that WSDOT has been discussing questions about future technologies, such as autonomous vehicles, within the agency. He said WSDOT’s approach to “do no harm” and avoid precluding technologies.

Mayor David Hill of Algona observed that 45% of the lane miles envisioned in the I-405 Master Plan is funded or complete. He asked how WSDOT plans to secure the remaining funding as it competes with other priorities.



## Corridor Program

Acting Secretary Millar said WSDOT recognizes that only a portion of the I-405 Master Plan is funded through Connecting Washington and other means, and it views the Master Plan as a very long-term project.

### VII. Public Comment

**Amy Danberg, I-405 project team communications**, facilitated a public comment period. The group heard from the following members of the public:

**David Hablewitz** spoke on behalf of the group Stop 405 Tolls and its 32,000 signatories. He presented several points about taxation and tolling, including Washington's high regressive tax and errors in the toll billing process. He argued that tolling is grossly inefficient. He also noted that 85% of the cars using the express toll lanes are single-occupant vehicles and voiced concern that the system is discouraging carpooling. He argued that building a new lane has improved traffic, not adding a toll lane. He offered to give a more detailed presentation in the future.

**Bill Popp**, a transportation consultant, took issue with WSDOT's assertion that the HOV lanes were once overloaded with vehicles. He said building two new lanes was unnecessary and a mistake.

**Will Knedlik** said WSDOT should not have proceeded quickly with tolling and cited the state Constitution's 18th amendment as exclusively applying to vehicles. He called for moving ahead with the Master Plan, noting that more than 15 years have passed since its adoption.

**Dick Paylor**, a former member of the I-405 Executive Committee, said the topics discussed at the meeting do not reflect the plan that the executive committee originally approved. He voiced concern that the existing plans address only a minority of the users along the corridor who use express toll lanes and transit. He called for focusing on the majority of I-405 users and focusing on reducing congestion.

### VIII. Wrap Up

Acting Secretary Millar said that he said he would like for the Executive Advisory Group to meet more frequently to discuss meaningful topics. He thanked the members for attending and noted that WSDOT looks forward to continued interagency coordination.

### Adjourn