



Corridor Program

Summary

I-405/SR 167 Executive Advisory Group Meeting

Tuesday, Dec. 11, 2018
Renton Community Center
2 p.m. – 4 p.m.

Executive Advisory Group members and elected officials in attendance:

- Secretary of Transportation Roger Millar, Chair
- Deputy Mayor Jay Arnold, City of Kirkland
- Mayor Nancy Backus, City of Auburn
- Rep. Judy Clibborn, Washington State House of Representatives
- Councilmember Randy Corman, City of Renton
- Sen-elect Mona Das, Washington State Senate
- Mayor Allen Dauterman, City of Newcastle
- Deputy Mayor Davina Duerr, City of Bothell
- Mayor Allan Ekberg, City of Tukwila
- Sen. Phil Fortunato, Washington State Senate
- Emmett Heath, Community Transit
- Sen. Guy Palumbo, Washington State Senate
- Mayor Dana Ralph, City of Kent
- Rep-elect My-Linh Thai, Washington State House of Representatives
- Councilmember Janice Zahn, City of Bellevue

Staff in attendance:

- Benjamin Brackett, Puget Sound Regional Council
- Erica Bramlet, Washington State Senate Transportation Committee
- Jeff Brauns, City of Newcastle
- Rob Brown, City of Kent
- Hannah Britt, I-405/SR 167 Program
- Dylan Counts, WSDOT
- Kelly Cheeseman, I-405/SR 167 Program
- Ingrid Gaub, City of Auburn
- Aaron Hallenberg (on behalf of Sen. Hans Zeiger), Washington State Senate
- Henry Hash, City of Tukwila
- Peter Heffernan, King County Department of Transportation (on behalf of Harold Taniguchi)
- Alex Herzog, City of Woodinville
- Lisa Hodgson, I-405/SR 167 Program
- Karen Kitsis, Sound Transit
- Cyndy Knighton, City of Tukwila
- Katie Kuciemba Halse, I-405/SR 167 Program
- Luke Lamon, Sound Transit
- Eddie Low, City of Bothell
- Elizabeth Mountsier (on behalf of Mayor John Marchione), City of Redmond
- Joyce Nichols, City of Bellevue
- Deb Osborne, Community Transit
- Jim Seitz, City of Renton
- Ariel Taylor, Sound Transit
- Wendy Taylor, I-405/SR 167 Program
- Blake Trask (on behalf of Councilmember Claudia Balducci), King County Council
- Karl Westby, I-405/SR 167 Program
- Lacey Jane Wolfe, City of Bellevue



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Presenters:

- Kim Henry, Program Administrator, I-405/SR 167 Program
- Patty Rubstello, Assistant Secretary of Urban Mobility and Access, WSDOT
- Bernard van de Kamp, East Corridor Development Director, Sound Transit
- Curt Warber, Project Manager, King County Parks

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. Introductions and Agenda Review

Patty Rubstello, WSDOT's Assistant Secretary of Urban Mobility and Access, and Roger Millar, WSDOT's Secretary of Transportation, welcomed the I-405/SR 167 Executive Advisory Group, asked members to introduce themselves and provided an overview of the meeting topics. Secretary Millar reminded attendees that the group last met in June 2018 and plans additional meetings in 2019. This meeting will include an update from King County Parks, Sound Transit and the Washington State Department of Transportation.

Secretary Millar reminded the group about the I-405 Master Plan that guides the work along the corridor. He reiterated that it is a multimodal, multiagency partnership for transit, highway and bicycle/pedestrian improvements.

II. King County Parks update

Curt Warber, Eastside Rail Corridor Regional Trail Project Manager for King County Parks, provided an update on trail progress, schedule and funding. Warber focused on three segments of the trail: the Lake Lanes trail, the Wilburton Gap and Trestle, and the NE 8th Street Crossing in the Wilburton neighborhood in Bellevue. He noted that the NE 8th Street Crossing is not directly related to the I-405 project but is in a critical part of the I-405 corridor. The new bridge over NE 8th Street will directly connect to the Sound Transit Light Rail station and a Rapid Ride line on NE 8th Street, providing multimodal opportunities while still preserving the function of NE 8th Street.

Warber gave an overview of the schedules for each trail segment, with the Lake Lanes Trail and the Wilburton Gap and Trestle scheduled to be completed by 2021 and the NE 8th Street Crossing scheduled to open in late 2021 or 2022.

Warber provided an update on the funding availability for the Eastside Rail Corridor Regional Trail. He noted that the preparation projects, which include the Ripley Lane Trestle, the Coal Creek Rail Removal and the Coal Creek Trestle, are fully funded out of the current parks levy. King County Parks is financially contributing to the I-405 project for some work on the Eastside Rail Corridor and the Wilburton Gap, which was a decision approved by King County Council. However, funding for the Wilburton Trestle and the NE 8th Street Crossing relies on the levy. The current parks levy is ending in 2019 and a new levy is anticipated to be on the fall 2019 ballot. The Wilburton Trestle, West Side Connection, and NE 8th Street Crossing are currently proposed for inclusion in the 2019 parks levy proposal.



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Lastly, Warber provided an update on the branding of the Eastside Rail Corridor Regional Trail, which was initiated by the Regional Advisory Council. He stated that the next time the EAG meets, the trail will likely have a new name. After public outreach, including surveys, interviews and a focus group, the Regional Advisory Council has decided on four candidate names: The 425, The Eastway, The E, and The Eastrail. He noted that the name should have a lasting impression for at least twenty years. Warber concluded his presentation by stating that by the early 2020s, King County Parks will fulfill its promise to create a new, non-motorized connection for the Eastside.

Discussion

- Sen. Guy Palumbo asked if the trail is all in the 425 area code in reference to the candidate name “The 425.” Warber said that the entire trail is in the 425 area code.
- Bellevue Councilmember Janice Zahn asked what the associated risks are with the 2019 parks levy. Warber replied that, if the renewal levy does not pass, King County Parks would go into near shutdown. He also noted that the current levy passed with 70 percent support. Councilmember Zahn noted that funding is important to understand so that the City of Bellevue can consider advocating for King County Parks.

III. Sound Transit update

Bernard van de Kamp, East Corridor Development Director for Sound Transit, provided an update on the schedule and plans for Sound Transit’s Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) system on I-405 and SR 522, which was part of the ST3 funding package. Over the past year, the project has advanced into the project development stage, which includes the environmental process.

Van de Kamp gave an overview of the BRT system, which is scheduled to be in service by 2024. Sound Transit has been working with jurisdictions along the I-405/SR 167 corridor to refine the project so there is a preferred project for the environmental review process. Sound Transit will go to the Board of Directors in early 2019 to seek authorization for the environmental phase for BRT on both I-405 and SR 522.

Van de Kamp gave an update on the schedule and progress of the interchange rebuilds at NE 44th Street in Renton and at NE 85th Street in Kirkland. He noted that Sound Transit is moving forward with an operations and maintenance base and associated land acquisition in the Canyon Park area.

Sound Transit’s next step for the NE 85th Street inline station is to seek authorization for a task order with WSDOT from the Sound Transit Capital Committee and then the Board in December 2018. The task order is a contract between Sound Transit and the state to develop the project concept, which will take the design from about 5 percent to 15 percent completion. The project will be in the project development phase for 18 to 24 months and then will most likely be procured as a design-build contract.

Sound Transit’s next steps for the NE 44th Street inline station will be to seek authorization from the Board in early 2019 to fund the project. Through negotiations, the agencies have arrived at an even split for the cost.

Lastly, van de Kamp provided an update on branding the BRT, station design and the schedule of the environmental process for the BRT system. He showed the BRT station concept and noted that Sound Transit wants a recognizable, common brand.



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Sound Transit is refining the design that will be taken into the environmental process and will be advancing design and engineering of the BRT system simultaneously. Sound Transit will be monitoring legislative actions in 2019.

Discussion

- Sen. Phil Fortunato asked what the cost of the even split between Sound Transit and WSDOT is for the NE 44th Street inline station. WSDOT I-405/SR 167 Program Administrator Kim Henry said that Sound Transit and WSDOT did a detailed breakdown of the different elements of the project and arrived at \$118.4 million for each organization. WSDOT's half is funded by Connecting Washington. Van de Kamp added that NE 44th Street has been negotiated as an even split cost and that NE 85th Street is fully funded by Sound Transit.
- City of Newcastle Mayor Allen Dauterman asked if BRT will serve the Newport Hills Park and Ride on 112th Avenue Southeast. Van de Kamp said that it is not part of the I-405 BRT project; Secretary Roger Millar added that it is part of the I-405 Master Plan. Mayor Dauterman also asked if there would be a park and ride at NE 44th Street. Van de Kamp said there is environmental clearance for a 200-stall surface lot and that Sound Transit is also considering a parking structure in addition to a surface lot. Secretary Roger Millar added that there is a new pilot program through King County Metro called Ride2, which offers on-demand shuttle service to and from transit hubs.
- City of Kirkland Deputy Mayor Jay Arnold discussed the preferred alternative at NE 85th Street, stating that the City of Kirkland, Sound Transit and WSDOT all worked together to come to an agreement and that the project design works better than other alternatives for less money. He stated that the City of Kirkland strongly supports the design.
- Senator Guy Palumbo expressed concerns about the representative alignment for BRT on SR 522 specifically regarding the NE 195th Street/Beardslee Boulevard stop, schedule and funding. Van de Kamp said that Sound Transit still has work to do in the north end and that they will continue to work with WSDOT to identify every opportunity in the near term, including finding the best possible connection between SR 522 and I-405. Sen. Palumbo asked a follow-up question about funding for the NE 85th Street inline station in Kirkland. Van de Kamp and Secretary Millar both explained that the new project concept is less expensive than what was originally proposed in the ST3 plan.
- City of Bellevue Councilmember Janice Zahn asked about the opening date of BRT, suggesting that Sound Transit open in a phased approach. Van de Kamp explained that opening any part of BRT before 2024 is extremely unlikely.
- Sen. Fortunato asked if the shelters at the station would provide enough weather shelter. Van de Kamp said Sound Transit is committed to weather shelter, noting that the platform will be 10-12 feet wide and they are being careful not to have conflicts between active lanes of traffic and the overhangs. He also stated that the concepts for the shelters are similar to the existing light rail shelters. Secretary Millar added that the average BRT wait time would be about five to ten minutes.
- City of Renton Councilmember Randy Corman provided a brief recap of Sound Transit's recent combined SR 522 and I-405 Elected Leadership Groups (ELG) meeting. The meeting focused on the discussion of the convergence of the two BRT lines in the Bothell area. He said the group had a long discussion about BRT staying close to its primary corridor to serve riders through inline stations versus the ability to serve city centers. The ELG also discussed the timing of the BRT system, noting that they are looking at the long-term vision for 10 and 20 years in the future. He concluded that the ELG did not come to any final decisions and that Sound Transit took away many action items.

IV. WSDOT update

Kim Henry, WSDOT I-405/SR 167 Program Administrator, reviewed the delivery schedule and next steps for upcoming projects on I-405, noting that the I-405 Renton to Bellevue Widening and Express Toll Lanes Project is



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scheduled to open in 2024, in time for Sound Transit's BRT system opening. Henry provided updates on the following: the I-405, SR 522 to SR 527 Capacity Improvements Project, the I-405/NE 132nd Street Interchange Project, and the I-405/NE 85th Street Interchange Project.

Henry provided an overview of the necessary steps to complete the 40-mile corridor before giving an update on the I-405/SR 167 Interchange Direct Connector Project, which is expected to open to traffic in early 2019. Henry stated that the Direct Connector Project is a critical link to complete the 40-mile express toll lanes system, ultimately connecting the HOT Lanes on SR 167 with the express toll lanes on I-405.

Henry explained that WSDOT was directed by the Legislature to complete a 40-mile corridor-wide express toll system; however, the Legislature has not yet given WSDOT tolling authority for the entire corridor. In particular, the I-405 Renton to Bellevue Widening and Express Toll Lanes Project requires toll authorization to complete the project as directed in the Connecting Washington transportation package. He gave a brief overview of the procurement schedule, noting that the procurement period will happen at the same time as the legislative session. To keep the project on schedule to open in 2024, it is critical that any necessary changes to project scope occur by the last addendum to the Request for Proposals, which is in mid-June and after session ends.

Henry reviewed the benefits of receiving toll authorization from the Legislature in 2019 and added that any major changes during the legislative session could cause delay to the Renton to Bellevue project. Henry reiterated that WSDOT has been working closely with Sound Transit and King County Parks to align their schedules and any Renton to Bellevue project changes would have a cascading effect on partner projects in the corridor.

Patty Rubstello, Assistant Secretary of Urban Mobility and Access, said WSDOT is proceeding with asking the Legislature to grant toll authorization for I-405 express toll lanes between Renton and Bellevue, to remove the pilot status from the SR 167 Hot Lanes and to authorize tolling for the Puget Sound Gateway Program. Rubstello discussed the need for express toll lanes on I-405, noting that our highways are already congested. She added that the Puget Sound Regional Council released information stating that 1.8 million people are living in the Puget Sound Region and that express toll lanes will provide trip reliability. She then showed the group a comparison between I-5 and I-405, mentioning that I-405 express toll lanes provide greater management of traffic flow.

Rubstello showed future traffic projections between Renton and Bellevue with and without express toll lanes. She noted that overall trips will improve but that WSDOT is looking at opportunities to fix future bottlenecks. Rubstello also mentioned that express toll lanes are necessary for BRT to be a reliable and predictable service. Rubstello reviewed customer sentiment statistics regarding express toll lanes, noting that WSDOT is finding that people see value in the lanes. She concluded that at the June 2018 EAG meeting, WSDOT presented revenue information on bonding; although the main goal for express toll lanes is to manage traffic, WSDOT will also be able to reinvest toll revenue back into the corridor.

Discussion

- City of Kent Mayor Dana Ralph noted that toll revenue from both I-405 and SR 167 would go into one account to be used for the entire I-405/SR 167 corridor. She asked how and when projects on SR 167 would be prioritized and if there was a priority list for SR 167 projects. Patty Rubstello responded that WSDOT continues work to address challenges on SR 167. Kim Henry added that a Master Plan was also developed for SR 167 but not to the same level as the I-405 Master Plan. He echoed Rubstello, stating that there are projects on SR 167 that WSDOT knows are necessary. WSDOT will keep the SR 167 priority projects in mind as they continue to do traffic forecasting. He said that right now WSDOT is focused on ensuring the next priority needs receive funding. Secretary Millar added that boundaries between the I-405/SR 167 and Puget Sound Gateway Megaprograms merge to create a managed lane



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corridor. He stated that funding and project prioritization conversations would likely continue into the near future.

- Sen. Phil Fortunato asked for clarification on the future traffic projection “heat maps” with and without the Renton to Bellevue express toll lanes. He then said that congestion in the north end dropped when the northbound peak-use shoulder lane opened between SR 527 and I-5. He said that he was having trouble understanding how restricting two lanes would help traffic. He asked Secretary Millar if the Department would study a five general-purpose lane configuration. Secretary Millar responded that WSDOT would only complete a study if directed by the Legislature. Millar went on to say the I-405 Master Plan assessed all traffic configuration options. He also compared I-405 to interstates with only general-purpose lanes, citing I-5 between SR 18 and Fife specifically.
- City of Bothell Deputy Mayor Davina Duerr expressed concerns about an interim project in Bothell for the connection between SR 522 BRT and I-405 BRT. She said that when those capacity improvements come online, the current stop disappears along with a second stop and a park and ride at Brickyard. She asked if there was a backup plan. Bernard van de Kamp said that Sound Transit is still working to find the best way to connect the BRT two lines, which is currently planned for NE 195th Street. He said that they are looking at the Brickyard Freeway Station using the general-purpose lanes. He acknowledged that if WSDOT puts direct access ramps at the I-405/SR 522 interchange, it raises issues regarding the feasibility of serving Brickyard. He said they are still in search of the ideal option that will also be compatible with the I-405 Master Plan and that they will continue to conduct more studies in that area. Secretary Millar added that Sound Transit and WSDOT are coordinating closely.
- City of Auburn Mayor Nancy Backus asked if the toll revenue collected on SR 167 would be utilized on I-405 or if it would remain for projects on SR 167. Secretary Millar said that to his understanding, it will be collected into one account and the projects that receive funding from that account would have to be identified through a process. He added that with one account for both highways, there is more flexibility to use money where the greatest need is along the entire corridor.
- City of Renton Councilmember Randy Corman said that he presumes WSDOT could identify where the toll revenue is coming from if it is in one account. He also said that perhaps revenue in one city could actually benefit another city and that he would hope we could track the equity. Secretary Millar confirmed that WSDOT wants to be flexible, yet transparent. Councilmember Corman added that he feels like people still might not understand how managed lanes work. He said that he was slow to agree to tolling, but that WSDOT has shown sufficient data to demonstrate that managed lanes move more traffic than general-purpose and HOV lanes. He said that residents of Renton have been paying for Sound Transit for many years and that the BRT system would be the first substantial return on their investment. He said he did not think BRT would be possible without express toll lanes and that he would hate for the fear of tolls to deny Renton residents from finally getting high-speed transit service. He said he hopes the Legislature is looking at tolling and making sure BRT is implemented properly in 2024.
- City of Auburn Mayor Nancy Backus asked if there is intent to have a Master Plan for SR 167. Secretary Millar said that it was his understanding from Kim Henry that the I-405 Master Plan includes the SR 167 corridor as well; that they were separate but then combined. Henry added that as a group, the EAG needs to develop an agreed upon project identification and prioritization process, particularly now that combining toll revenue is being considered. Secretary Millar reminded members that, currently, there is only money for the Renton to Bellevue project assuming toll authorization happens. He said that if tolling is authorized for Renton to Bellevue, a process would be determined for future toll revenue.
- Sen. Guy Palumbo asked for clarification about the possibility of an inline station in Bothell. Bernard van de Kamp explained BRT would use outside stops at Northeast 195th Street and Canyon Park before the Lynnwood Transit Center. He said that there are limitations on how far they can go with capital investment. Secretary Millar added that ideally, everything would be built in 2024, but that Sound Transit has made plans for what is currently funded today and that, if the agencies work together, they will be positioned to make changes based on future funding. Sen. Palumbo expressed frustration with the north end configuration that was included in ST3.



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- City of Bellevue Councilmember Janice Zahn commented that it makes sense to combine I-405 and SR 167 as one corridor. She suggested that the EAG identify a prioritization process before implementation. She requested that the Legislature move forward with toll authorization.
- City of Kent Mayor Dana Ralph said that the SR 509/SR 167 corridor has come together with a unified voice. She asked if there is a way for the EAG to communicate more efficiently with the Legislature because toll authorization is necessary to continue advancing projects in the corridor. Secretary Millar said that the agency's role is to provide information and answer the group's questions.
- Sen. Fortunato said the last time the EAG met, they discussed extending tolling farther south on SR 167 into Puyallup. Secretary Millar said that the SR 167 HOT lanes are a pilot project and that the plans are to make that authorization permanent and extend it from the Pierce County line down to Puyallup, in addition to combining the SR 167 account with the I-405 account. Sen. Fortunato remarked that money from his district should not be spent elsewhere along the corridor. Secretary Millar said that revenue would not be able to be spent anywhere without legislative approval, but that there is value in flexibility.
- Councilmember Corman said that residents in Renton have similar concerns to those of Sen. Fortunato. Although, he said, sometimes improvements made in Bellevue help Renton more than the improvements made in Renton. He suggested that the group send a letter to the Legislature.
- Mayor Backus agreed with Councilmember Corman, stating that they have to look at the situation for the greater network. Spending the money in the locations where the tolls are collected may not be the best benefits for the entire system; rather, they should look at what will help move the greatest number of people.
- Community Transit CEO Emmett Heath said that the I-405 express toll lanes between Bellevue and Lynnwood have improved speed and reliability for Community Transit service and that it is attracting people to public transit due to the easy access and faster, more predictable travel times. He agreed with Councilmember Corman's earlier point that the more people use it and trust it, the more trip times should continue to be faster and more predictable and the service builds on itself. Secretary Millar added that WSDOT is releasing the Corridor Capacity Report soon, which will show that buses are moving more people.
- City of Kirkland Deputy Mayor Jay Arnold commented that the Eastside Transportation Partnership (ETP) supports the express toll lanes and a number of improvements outside of ETP's jurisdiction.

V. Public comment

Vic Bishop, Chair of the Eastside Transportation Association, said that the Renton to Bellevue project is just the beginning and that the I-405 Master Plan is extremely robust, noting that it calls for two new lanes between Tukwila and Lynnwood. He called for the Legislature to take additional action because he does not believe that toll revenue will be enough to fund all aspects of the Master Plan. He stated that Eastside Transportation Association is putting together a coalition of the Eastside Transportation Partnership, the Eastside Transportation Association, and cities to develop a common mission encouraging the Legislature to take additional action.

David Hablewitz asked attendees how they traveled to the meeting, noting that not enough people carpool or take public transit. He posed a series of questions, asking if people would be willing to change their habits and if anyone present drives on I-405 between SR 522 and I-5 during peak times. He said that when the tolls reach \$7, the lanes become useless and that the price cap will have to go up, comparing the price cap to express toll lanes in Virginia that do not have a cap. He said that the customer sentiment surveys for express toll lanes are unreliable because they use sample bias. He stated that the express toll lanes are failing and not getting transit to where it is needed. He ended by saying that charging money to use the lane does not make traffic move faster.

Denise Carnahan, resident of the Fairwood neighborhood in Renton, said that residents of Renton have been paying for Sound Transit for over 20 years. She said she researched all the Eastside cities from Woodinville to Renton and Issaquah, and that Renton is the second largest city, has the highest poverty rate, and the lowest



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income. She noted that Sound Transit never intended to implement light rail south of Interstate 90 and Renton residents are subsidizing light rail for people with higher incomes and lower poverty rates. She called for a flyover ramp and a park and ride at the I-405/SR 169 interchange. She stated that light rail is about 59 percent of the ST3 budget and BRT is 3 percent, and that Renton residents are dependent on WSDOT just to get BRT. She said that the south end of the corridor has been shortchanged. She ended by saying she would like to see water taxis that can take south end residents up to the light rail and that she believes there are many opportunities to get Fairwood residents to I-405.

VI. Wrap up

Secretary Millar thanked the EAG members for attending and reviewed the next steps. He said that 2019 will be a busy year and thanked outgoing EAG members for their cooperation over the years, specifically Rep. Judy Clibborn. He also welcomed new and incoming EAG members. He concluded, stating the I-405/SR 167 Program will reach out to EAG members in early 2019 regarding the next meeting.