



## Summary

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

Thursday, Jan. 7, 2021

Zoom

8:30 a.m. – 10 a.m.

#### Executive Advisory Group members and elected officials in attendance:

- Deputy Mayor Jay Arnold, City of Kirkland
- Mayor Nancy Backus, City of Auburn
- Council Vice Chair Claudia Balducci, King County Council
- Commissioner Shiv Batra, Washington State Transportation Commission
- Mayor Angela Birney, City of Redmond
- Councilmember Randy Corman, City of Renton
- Sue Dreier, Pierce Transit
- Mayor Allan Ekberg, City of Tukwila
- Rep. Debra Entenman, Washington State House of Representatives
- Senator Phil Fortunato, Washington State Senate
- Mayor Gary Harris, City of Woodinville
- Senator Chris Gildon, Washington State Senate
- Dan Mathis, Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)
- Mayor Linda Newing, City of Newcastle
- Rep. Tina Orwall, Washington State House of Representatives
- Councilmember Mason Thompson, City of Bothell
- Rep. Bill Ramos, Washington State House of Representatives
- Senator Rebecca Saldaña, Washington State Senate
- Rep. My-Linh Thai, Washington State House of Representatives
- Terry White, King County Metro
- Councilmember Janice Zahn, City of Bellevue

#### Staff in attendance:

- Shravan Aeneni, WSDOT
- Roland Behee, Community Transit
- Erica Bramlet, Transportation Committee, Washington State Senate
- Jeff Brauns, City of Newcastle
- Rob Brown, City of Kent
- Sheri Call, Washington Trucking Associations
- Andrea Charrier, WSDOT
- Dylan Counts, WSDOT
- Alyson Cummings, WSDOT
- Samantha DeMars-Hanson, I-405/SR 167 Program
- Augusta DeVries, I-405/SR 167 Program
- Stephen Dickson, Snohomish County
- Marshall Elizer, WSDOT
- Kimberly Farley, Chief System Officer, Sound Transit
- Ingrid Gaub, City of Auburn
- Emily Glad, WSDOT
- Reema Griffith, WSTC
- Amy Grotefendt, WSDOT
- Aaron Hallenberg, Pierce County
- Diana Hart, City of Woodinville
- Peter Heffernan, King County Metro
- Heather Hernandez, WSDOT
- Joshua Johnson, WSDOT
- Ron Judd, WSDOT
- Tam Kutzmark, City of Redmond
- Luke Lamon, Sound Transit



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- Tanya Lavoy, Washington State Senate (on behalf of Patty Kuderer)
- Erin Leonhart, City of Bothell
- Doug Levy, City of Renton
- Eddie Low, City of Bothell
- Mary MacKie, I-405/SR 167 Program
- Robin Mayhew, WSDOT
- Kelly McGourty, Puget Sound Regional Council
- Ann McNeil, Sound Transit
- Megan McPhaden, Transportation Committee, Washington State House of Representatives
- Julie Meredith, Assistant Secretary for Urban Mobility and Access, WSDOT
- Victoria Miller, I-405/SR 167 Program
- Martin Pastucha, City of Renton
- Joel Pfundt, City of Kirkland
- Andrew Schmid, Sound Transit
- Carl See, Washington State Transportation Commission
- Jim Seitz, City of Renton
- Andrew Singelakis, City of Bellevue
- Charla Skaggs, WSDOT
- Alex Soldano, Sound Transit
- Kelly Snyder, Snohomish County
- Mike Swires, WSDOT
- Ariel Taylor, Sound Transit
- Blake Trask, King County
- Curt Warber, King County
- Karl Westby, I-405/SR 167 Program
- Rob Woeck, I-405/SR 167 Program
- Lacey Jane Wolfe, City of Bellevue

## Presenters:

- Ed Barry, Toll Division Director, WSDOT
- Colleen Gants, Communications Lead and Meeting Facilitator, I-405/SR 167 Program, WSDOT
- Lisa Hodgson, Program Administrator, I-405/SR 167 Program, WSDOT
- Secretary of Transportation Roger Millar, Chair
- Peter Rogoff, CEO, Sound Transit
- Bernard van de Kamp, East Corridor Development Director, Sound Transit

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: <https://wsdot.wa.gov/Tolling/EastsideCorridor/EAG2013.htm>

## I. Introductions and Agenda Review

Roger Millar, Secretary of Transportation, welcomed the Interstate 405/State Route 167 Executive Advisory Group members and provided an overview of the agenda. He said presenters will provide updates on tolling, the I-405/SR 167 Corridor Program, and Sound Transit I-405 Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Project. He acknowledged the financial realities WSDOT is facing as well as the budget and forecasting process. He also highlighted the partnerships and multimodal aspects of the corridor program.

Secretary Millar thanked retiring EAG member, Emmett Heath, Community Transit. He also welcomed new members Terry White (King County Metro), Ric Ilgenfritz (Community Transit) and all the newly elected officials who were joining for the first time.

Secretary Millar then introduced Peter Rogoff, CEO of Sound Transit, who echoed Secretary Millar's comment about the partnership based on a common vision for the corridor and previewed information about the BRT project as well as the Sound Transit Board of Directors' Realignment process that would continue through



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summer 2021. Mr. Rogoff discussed the commitment to I-405 BRT, acknowledging stakeholders' desire to connect cities on I-405 with a reliable high-capacity transit system.

Secretary Millar highlighted the Governor's budget. There will be more to share once the transportation budget is finalized and signed in late April/early May, but the 2021-23 biennial budget prioritizes fish passage, preservation and clean transportation. He talked about how the Legislative Session will look different this year while the session takes place virtually, but WSDOT is committed to working with the Legislature on project timing.

While the Governor's proposed budget remains within the framework of no new revenue sources (i.e., no new taxes or fees), his office continues to work with legislative leaders developing new revenue proposals. Senate Transportation Committee (STC) Chair Steve Hobbs started working with his constituents, transportation stakeholders and WSDOT on new revenue discussions in 2018. House Transportation Committee Chair Jake Fey, STC Vice-Chair Rebecca Saldaña, and STC Ranking Member Curtis King are also working with constituents, stakeholders and WSDOT to explore new revenue proposals. The Secretary also noted that while WSDOT has received some federal funds, there is still a significant gap and we will remain shovel ready with key projects should additional federal funding become available.

## **Discussion:**

- Questions/comments from EAG members:
  - Kirkland **Deputy Mayor Jay Arnold** asked about the Governor's proposed budget and WSDOT's current \$1.3 billion gap. Can you provide more details about implications for I-405 projects?
    - Secretary Millar said that the Governor's proposed budget does not propose new revenue, but it does point out that we have a gap. The funds to fill that gap must come from somewhere. To fund fish passage and preservation objectives, the Governor proposes to delay; not cancel projects. The proposal does not cite specific projects rather the Governor intends to work with the Legislature to determine what projects to delay during session. Projects currently under contract, with existing legal obligations and existing preservation, fish passage and safety projects would not be delayed.
    - The state needs access to \$7 million a year to keep our system in a state of good repair. The Governor's budget is a start but does not solve the problem. Soon we must decide to add some revenue to the transportation budget or decide to push projects out in time. We will continue to provide the Governor and Legislature with data and information as the 2021 legislative session moves forward. Preservation and safety are at top of the list. We are not the decision makers, so we do not know at this point.
  - **Auburn Mayor Nancy Backus** expressed concern over further delay in the SR 167 Master Plan as related to SR 167 in Gov. Inslee's budget.
  - **Bellevue Councilmember Janice Zahn** emphasized the importance of supporting the North End Express Toll Lanes and I-405 BRT and is interested in discussions between WSDOT and legislators to develop alternative ideas to keep North End projects funded and on schedule until bonding of toll revenues are available.

## **II. Public comment**

There were no verbal public comments to share. One emailed comment was shared with EAG members in advance of the meeting.

WSDOT provided time for questions/comments from the public after each presentation topic and were addressed as time allowed. Due to time constraints some questions/comments will be addressed following the meeting:



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- Rocale Timmons, public guest, asked if, given ridership is up in the south end compared to other communities, will that be considered when prioritizing projects? She believed it speaks to demand and the need for public transportation despite health crises. Also, will social equity be considered when reprioritizing projects?
  - Mr. Rogoff addressed this question, noting that ridership differs by route and is down significantly system-wide from the pandemic. The Sound Transit Board adopted 8 criteria that ST staff will use in developing realignment scenarios, including Socio-Economic Equity.
- Becky Birch, public guest, mentioned a vaccine would likely help with transit ridership, additionally a marketing campaign to encourage safe ridership would also help. She also commented that transit station roofs do not protect riders from rain, and it is hard to transfer luggage when heading to the airport from Bothell, for example.
  - Question noted, due to time constraints, Sound Transit staff will respond directly to Ms. Birch.

### III. Tolling update

Ed Barry, WSDOT Toll Division Director, shared that traffic and revenue reached its lowest point this spring, recovering steadily during the summer until plateauing last fall due to ongoing pandemic activity and extended work-from-home policies for the region's major employers. Revenue is more impacted on dynamically priced facilities such as I-405 and SR 167 because toll rates are not rising to pre-pandemic levels due to the lack of congestion in the general purpose lanes.

He shared data on I-405 and SR 167, showing average daily trips increasing as we close out 2020. He also shared WSDOT's traffic maps from February, March, July, October and December for peak period traffic in the a.m. and p.m. These data all showed traffic coming back – more so on SR 167. SR 167 did not see traffic drop off as much as other corridors and it also rebounded quicker than other corridors. This is primarily due to more people in positions (construction, manufacturing, nursing, retail, food service) requiring them to work on site.

With less traffic in the region, drivers are more likely to take other un-tolled routes, even if it means traveling further or if their trip takes a longer. The exception is the Tacoma Narrows Bridge where there is no alternate route other than traveling south through Shelton and Olympia. The November 2020 forecast projects that over the next 10 years traffic and revenue will continue to be below pre-COVID forecasts.

Ed reiterated that although the pandemic creates uncertainty, WSDOT is still doing the work to keep these projects construction-ready for when the funding information is available. In preparation for the upcoming Legislative session, a preliminary analysis of traffic and revenue is underway. While this analysis is not to the level that you can bond against, it will provide a preliminary idea of what traffic and revenue may look like post-COVID.

#### **Discussion:**

- Questions from EAG members:
  - **Kirkland Deputy Mayor Jay Arnold** asked if Ed could provide details about conditions necessary to say that traffic has "stabilized" and can proceed with the tolling revenue study? He asked if there were any timeframes for proceeding given projections.
    - Ed Barry answered that he wished he had a definitive answer to when the investment grade traffic and revenue study could be completed. The unprecedented nature of the pandemic makes it difficult to give a timeline. As he mentioned during his presentation that WSDOT is working on post-COVID traffic and revenue projections to try and answer questions this Legislative session. WSDOT is committed to working with stakeholders



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- and the Legislature to give the best information possible as it becomes available. Additionally, WSDOT must work with the Office of the State Treasurer on the timing, requirements and size of bonding that will fund these projects.
- **Bothell Councilmember Mason Thompson** said it looks like the takeaway is that we are likely to need to find new revenue to complete the projects associated with bonded toll revenue. He asked about what timeline we must figure funding out before this discussion starts to delay the completion of BRT in 2025.
    - Pre-COVID, the original schedule was to bond and award the North End project in early 2022 for a 2025 opening. With bonding less feasible, the project would need an alternative funding source to maintain the original delivery schedule.
    - Ed also touched on this in his presentation – he added that the timeline relies on what traffic will look like and what the new normal is post-pandemic. Those are critical pieces that the team reviews on a quarterly basis as they update forecasting and work with the Legislature on needs.
    - The effects of the pandemic have brought revenue challenges to both Sound Transit and WSDOT planned investments, which could affect how and when the agencies can deliver these programs. The agencies are working together to analyze how we can deliver an ETL and BRT system considering these challenges.
  - **King County Council Vice Chair Claudia Balducci** asked if, following Deputy Mayor Jay Arnold's questions, the presenters could speak a little about needed decisions and dependencies -- does progress on the I-405 projects halt until we have the study done and decisions based on its conclusions? She asked if some actions could go forward before/at the same time as the study and if legislative action could change the answer.
    - ST and WSDOT will continue to work together and perform financial analyses to determine post-COVID 19 revenue (including the state's ability to bond on reduced I-405 toll revenue). These study outcomes will affect available revenue to fund a delivery approach. Corridor projects are continuing towards shovel readiness while additional information becomes available for policy makers to make decisions.
  - **Senator Phil Fortunato** asked about why the tolls jump in the out years.
    - It was explained that the bar graphics in the presentation do not represent toll rates. They represent increases in trips and revenue starting in 2025 which coincides with the completion of the Renton to Bellevue project. The forecast assumption is that the completion of that project will draw more users to Bellevue to Lynnwood in those out years therefore showing the jump in trips and revenue after RTB opens.

## IV. Update on I-405/SR 167 Corridor Program Delivery and I-405 BRT Project Delivery

### Overview:

I-405/SR 167 Program Administrator Lisa Hodgson and Sound Transit East Corridor Development Director Bernard van de Kamp provided a joint presentation about program delivery.

Lisa reiterated that WSDOT has partnered with Sound Transit to deliver Bus Rapid Transit on I-405 and connect communities to regional light rail system and other local transit systems. She reminded participants that the Executive Advisory Group has a long history of collaborating with WSDOT and partner agencies on the I-405/SR 167 corridor program and thanked members for their dedication. EAG members have been instrumental in advising and delivering system benefits over the years, starting in 2003 with the Nickel and 2005 TPA funding packages all the way up to 2019 with the passing of Bill 5825 which Ed spoke to earlier.



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Lisa and Bernard provided a history of the I-405 Master Plan, SR 167 Corridor Plan, and the Sound Transit's Long-Range Plan (ST-3). The I-405 Master Plan recommended bus rapid transit as the high-capacity transit and ST-3 planned for I-405 BRT. The Master Plan is a robust plan and strategy to deliver long range plan of 150 projects as funding was approved in phases. The SR 167 Corridor Plan – is a highway planning level document that will be updated in the future to a multi-modal SR 167 Master Plan. Together, the I-405/SR 167 corridor forms a viable alternative to I-5. Sound Transit and WSDOT have been working together closely to start implementing all three of these plans and are well positioned even despite the financial challenges.

Lisa said that WSDOT and Sound Transit will continue to work within the financial framework to progress towards construction readiness of Express Toll Lanes, important direct accesses, and inline stations in support of overall system benefits including BRT. WSDOT is looking for opportunities to maximize efficiencies, address state of good repair and prioritize fish passage.

Bernard and Lisa provided an overview of the WSDOT and Sound Transit projects on the corridor, starting with the north and covering the current design and environmental phase and status of construction readiness for each. Each project incorporates partnership, system performance benefits, multimodal improvements and benefits, fish passage and state of good repair. The projects they reviewed were the SR 522-SR 527 Express Toll Lanes Improvement Project, Lynnwood City Center, Canyon Park in Bothell, SR 522/I-405 Transit Hub, Brickyard Inline Freeway Station, NE 85th Inline Freeway Station, Totem Lake/Kingsgate Project, NE 132<sup>nd</sup> Street Interchange Project, SR 520/124<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE Interchange Project, and Bellevue Transit center. Lisa noted the Governor's budget proposed pushing SR 522-SR 527 out one biennium.

Lisa kicked off the south corridor by highlighting the Renton to Bellevue Widening and Express Toll Lanes Project, which is currently under construction. Bernard also reviewed the NE 44<sup>th</sup> Inline Station and Park and Ride Lot, the South Renton Transit Center, Tukwila International Boulevard Station, and Burien Transit Center.

Lisa also reviewed the SR 167 projects, including the SR 167 Toll Upgrade Project, SR 167 Southbound Auxiliary Lane Project, and SR 167 Northbound Express Toll Lane Extension. They could deliver all SR 167 projects together, but depending on funding availability, they may go separately. The Governor's budget proposes including the SR 167 projects in the 21-23 biennium.

Lisa ended by reviewing the system-wide benefits of this north-south corridor featuring a dual express toll lane system providing the choice for a faster, more reliable trip for toll-paying customers, carpools, vanpools, transit, and STRIDE BRT service. We have an opportunity to address critical fish barriers, environmental enhancements, and repair infrastructure through capital improvements.

### **Discussion:**

- Questions from EAG members:
  - **Bothell Councilmember Mason Thompson** said that on the south side of SR 522 at the I-405/SR 522 interchange there is multifamily housing and mobile homes with no access because of the Sammamish River. He asked if there has been any discussion about a pedestrian bridge across the river to connect that area to the station.
    - Lisa said that is not part of the scope, but they are aware of that area. Just south of this area there are modifications that Sound Transit is looking at for the Brickyard station connectivity. She said they could explore that and discuss it further in a follow up conversation.
  - **Kirkland Deputy Mayor Jay Arnold** asked if, related to above uncertainty on timing for toll bonding to support north-end I-405 improvements, there is the potential for north line BRT being implemented in phases if I-405 ETL improvements are significantly delayed.



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- Bernard said there could be opportunities to phase this and that will be part of the Sound Transit Board's realignment discussion and the WA State Legislative Session in the coming months. The Legislature and ST Board have prioritized an ETL and BRT system on the I-405 corridor for faster, more reliable trips throughout the eastside, connecting urban growth areas and prioritizing system benefits. BRT goals are connecting the communities along the I-405 corridor by providing transit access, speed, and reliability to the system. Highly dependent on a strong ST-WSDOT partnership and intentional design. Bernard agreed with Kirkland Deputy Mayor Jay Arnold who noted, there are limited resources in the foreseeable future so that will be part of the discussion as they move forward.
  - **King County Council Vice Chair Claudia Balducci** reminded the team to remember there is strong interest in siting equitable transit-oriented development/housing closer to the Kingsgate station (related to Kingsgate). Transit-oriented development (TOD) is currently being planned in conjunction with ST, WSDOT and the City of Kirkland, and ST is designing their garage footprint to accommodate TOD on the site.
  - **Bellevue Councilmember Janice Zahn** asked if there is an opportunity to open the south S1 BRT line even if the north S2 BRT line is under construction.
    - Bernard said the short answer is yes, they can be operated independently.
  - **Renton Councilmember Randy Corman** said there are conversations underway with Renton and Sound Transit about the optimal location for the park and ride at 44th Street. He thanked Sound Transit for participating in those conversations. He hopes they can reach a mutually beneficial location.
- Questions/comments from the public to be addressed following the meeting:
    - Rocale Timmons asked if someone could speak to the I-405 N 8th Street exit whose planning was funded out of last year's session? Is it possible to dove tail it into the larger project for economies of scale? Are there plans for looking at the exit for a much-needed BRT station given all the growth with Southport and their plans for expansion, top golf, the redevelopment of the Fry's site, etc.?

WSDOT will be in touch regarding the next Executive Advisory Group meeting. All EAG materials can be found at: <https://wsdot.wa.gov/Tolling/EastsideCorridor/EAG2013.htm>