



JOINT TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE

P.O. Box 40937 • 531 15th Avenue S.E. • Olympia, Washington 98504 • (360) 786-7312 • <http://www1.leg.wa.gov/jtc>
November 30, 2005

TO: Members, Senate and House Transportation Committees

SUBJECT: Joint Transportation Committee Update

This is the second report of the Joint Transportation Committee to the Senate and House Transportation Committee members. JTC members want to keep you informed of activities of the new Committee, formed in July 2005. The four-member JTC was created to conduct important transportation study efforts and to support Senate and House Transportation Committee member participation in collaborative and educational efforts.

The JTC has undertaken several tasks, including mandated studies, as set forth in the Transportation Budget and described in the attached report. The Committee has met monthly, organizing its activities, including adoption of a work-plan, a budget and by-laws. Two studies are nearing completion and are due to the Legislature this January, a Passenger-Only Ferry Study and a review of the Motor Vehicle Excise Tax. The attached summary reflects Committee actions to date, which we trust you will find informative.

We also want to acknowledge the many contributions of Senator Swecker, who is leaving the JTC. The Committee members also welcome Senator Benson, our newest Committee member. The JTC membership consists of the Chair and Ranking Minority Member of the Senate and House Transportation Committees; and therefore Senator Benson, replacing Senator Swecker as Ranking Minority Member on the Senate Transportation Committee, now serves on the JTC.

We intend to continue providing Senate and House Transportation Committee members with regular updates on JTC activities. Also, Senate and House Transportation Committee members are invited to the next JTC meetings, 1:30-3:30pm, January 6, 2006. Please share with us any comments on issues that you are particularly interested in. If you have any questions you may contact either Diane Schwickerath at 786-7312, or Gene Baxstrom at 786-7398.

Senator Mary Margaret Haugen
Co-Chair

Representative Ed Murray
Co-Chair

Senator Brad Benson

Representative Beverly Woods

Joint Transportation Committee: November 2005 Update

Background:

The 2005 Legislature made significant reforms to transportation programs including: direct appointment of the Secretary of Transportation by the Governor; restructuring of the Transportation Commission's responsibilities; transfer of the Transportation Performance Audit Board to the Commission; State Auditor conduct of performance audits; and elimination of the Legislative Transportation Committee. As part of transportation reform, the Legislature also created the Joint Transportation Committee. The Joint Transportation Committee assumed certain duties of the Legislative Transportation Committee, and provides resources for transportation studies identified in the budget and for other on-going transportation activities.

The four-member Joint Transportation Committee (JTC) consists of the Chairs and the Ranking Members of the House and Senate Transportation Committees. Senator Haugen and Rep. Murray serve as Co-chairs.

JTC Meetings:

The Committee has monthly meetings. . The Committee organized at its first meeting in July and since has focused on accomplishing its assigned studies, closely coordinated with the House and Senate Standing Committees on Transportation to address issues important to both committees. JTC Coordinator Diane Schwickerath, and Gene Baxstrom, a half-time Policy Analyst, work closely with standing committee staff.

JTC Studies and 2005-2006 Interim Work Plan: Section 205 of the Transportation Budget assigned several studies to the JTC. Since these studies are also of direct interest to the Standing Committees on Transportation, JTC and House and Senate Transportation Committee staff are collaborating in those efforts. Following is a description and update on each of those studies:

Passenger-only Ferry Evaluation:

- Recommend the most cost effective means of providing passenger-only ferry service, with study guided by an 18-member steering committee of stakeholders, including four legislative members--Senators Spanel & Oke and Reps. Woods & McDermott;
- JTC contracted for a facilitator to help organize meetings and develop recommendations;
- A subcommittee of the Task Force met four times, and the full Task Force met seven times;
- The Task Force approved a "preliminary report" on November 29th, setting forth mutual interest recommendations for passenger-only ferry policy, including criteria for setting priorities for passenger-only service. The Task Force, has not yet reached agreement on "Findings", in part due to the need for a detailed review of costs for alternative POF service plans. The Committee approved going ahead with a financial analysis of service alternatives, as recommended by the Task Force, as well as the Task Force completing its work, both subject to approval of the JTC regarding costs. A report is due to the JTC by January 6, 2006.

MVET Depreciation Schedule study:

- Determine the feasibility of a statewide uniform MVET including development of an MVET depreciation schedule that more accurately reflects vehicle value, but does not hinder outstanding contractual obligations (single, uniform depreciation schedule for local governments);
- Required participation from Sound Transit, a Regional Transportation Planning Organization, DOT, Attorney Generals office, DOL and the financial community;
- Staff working groups evaluated legal and contractual issues and methodologies for setting vehicle value and alternative depreciation methods; this analysis is largely complete with results presented to the JTC for review and comment, with a report to be submitted to House and Senate Transportation Committees.
- A preliminary study document was presented on November 30, 2005 to the Committee by House and Senate Transportation Committee staff, comments and suggestions were solicited, and final study results are to be complete by the 2006 Session.

Review of Transportation Budgeting Methodologies and Processes:

- Examine the budgeting process and the program structure of the Department of Transportation to provide for improved budget methodology and improved communication of the budget;
- Consultant selection process completed and contract just awarded to Cambridge Systematics. Contract amount is \$250,000. OFM and DOT involvement is planned; and the consultant will be in contact with several Transportation Committee members;
- Scheduled completion in June 2006, for use in agency budget development cycle.

Long-Term Transportation Finance study:

- Examine the long term viability of the state's transportation financing methods and sources, with attention to reliance on fuel tax, alternative sources of user-based revenue, implications of debt financing, and effectiveness of state-distributed funds for local governments;
- Up to \$450,000 was appropriated to contract for the study, and affected agencies will be involved;
- Study scope is now being developed and contract will be awarded in March or April, 2006;
- Study results are due to the fiscal committees in November, 2006.

Other policy-related issues of interest to JTC: While not specifically provided in the transportation budget, there are other activities in which the JTC will be involved:

Transportation Governance study:

- Originally part of JTC work plan, but this budget proviso was vetoed by the Governor and is being done by OFM;
- Evaluates the statutory duties roles and functions of the Transportation Commission and the DOT, including responsibilities which may be transferred to the Executive Branch and to the Legislature;
- The OFM work-plan has included stakeholder interviews, statute review and calls for development of a recommendation to the Governor before the 2006 Legislative Session.

Support for Regional Transportation forums:

- JTC has committed up to \$10,000 to match Puget Sound Regional Council support for a facilitator for the Regional Transportation Leadership Group, a 25-member group of leaders in the Puget Sound region. The PSRC was asked to convene a series of leadership meetings aimed at developing a common regional approach to succeed on regional transportation. This effort was requested by legislative members.

Other activities:

- Site-visits: arrange briefings, tours and site visits to keep Transportation Committee members informed of emerging issues, projects of interest, and advances in transportation policy and budget.
 - JTC is sponsoring a tour of Vancouver, British Columbia's regional transportation system on December 15th and 16th. Transportation Committee members are invited to a briefing by the Trans-link CEO on Vancouver regional governance and a multimodal tour of transportation facilities.
- Support for Transportation Committee members: Several Transportation Committee members serve on various committees and task forces related to transportation. The JTC provides per diem and other support for those members, as approved by the JTC.
- Administrative Activities:
 - Work continues through January 2006 on sunsetting the Legislative Transportation Committee;
 - JTC new agency infrastructure set-up is complete and functioning.