



Meeting Summary

JTC State Role in Public Transportation Public Transportation Advisory Panel – Workshop #1

Tuesday, July 29, 2010

9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

Sound Transit Union Station – Ruth Fisher Board Room

In attendance:

- Senator Mary Margaret Haugen, Senate Transportation Committee Chair
- Representative Judy Clibborn, House Transportation Committee Chair
- Senator Brian Hatfield, District 19
- Senator Curtis King, District 14
- Representative Jim Moeller, District 49
- Representative Marco Liias, District 21
- Representative Mike Armstrong, District 12
- Katy Taylor, WSDOT
- Kelly Scalf, Rural Resources
- Richard DeRock, Link Transit
- Kevin Desmond, King County Metro Transit
- Martha Rose, Island Transit
- Ron Tober, Sound Transit (alternate)
- Page Scott, Yakima Conference of Governments
- Charlie Howard, Puget Sound Council of Governments
- Rick Benner, Western Washington University
- Jim Stanton, Microsoft
- Virginia McIntyre, League of Women Voters
- Chuck Ayers, Cascade Bicycle Club
- Karen Stites, Amalgamated Transit Union, 1765
- Gladys Gillis, Starline Luxury Coaches
- Tom Jones, Consultant

Not in attendance:

- Senator Dan Swecker, District 20
- Representative Terry Nealey, District 16
- Levi Wilhelmsen, rider
- Ted Horobiowski, Avista Corp.
- Hans Van Someren Greve, Stemilt Growers
- Alice Tawresey, former Transportation Commissioner
- Dave O'Connell, Mason County Transit

The first workshop with the Joint Transportation Committee (JTC) Public Transportation Advisory Panel was held on June 29, 2010. The workshop was attended by 22 of the Advisory Panel members. The meeting started with welcoming remarks by Representative Judy Clibborn and panel member introductions, which included discussing what they hoped to achieve out of this study. The Parsons Brinckerhoff team, led by Sheila Dezarn and Barbara Gilliland, gave an overview of the key research to begin discussions in four key areas:

- Existing State Role
- Summary of Unmet Needs
- Introduction to Performance Management
- Other State Programs

Introductions

Representative Clibborn welcomed the panel members and thanked them for their willingness to participate in this study. The legislature has heard from advocates over the years regarding public transportation needs and funding. This work is to help re-assess the state's role in public transportation and consider how it should be integrated into an overall transportation system.

Panel members introduced themselves and highlighted their interest in being on the panel and what they hope to get out of this work. A summary of key interests included:

- Shared Vision
 - Public transportation's role in achieving state interests (i.e. energy conservation, safety)
 - Public transportation as an integral element of the transportation system
 - Understanding of the greater public transportation network and issues
 - Understanding of special needs, senior and rural area mobility issues
 - Performance monitoring
- Improving Public Transportation
 - Access
 - Land use/transportation connections
 - Increasing ridership
- Funding
 - Understanding the state's investment
 - Partnerships and collaboration
 - Innovative Programs
 - Sustainable sources

Study Purpose and Key Themes from Panel Interviews

Sheila Dezarn reviewed the primary purpose for this study – to identify the state role in public transportation and develop a statewide blueprint for public transportation to guide state investments. This work is to take a broader look at public transportation. In addition, Senator Haugen stated that one of our purposes is to ferret out which laws prevent innovation and creativity so we can move forward in the future.

Barbara Gilliland reviewed the themes that came out of the interviews with individual panel members. Four overarching themes came out during her discussions regarding the key areas where the panel should focus:

- One size does not fit all – need a mix of strategies, goals, roles, and programs
- Focus on the big picture – emphasize multimodal and connective services
- Meeting state goals – reduce barriers to cost effectiveness and address urban and rural issues
- Funding – focus on sustainability, coordination, and funding flexibility

The panel discussed the need to develop innovative solutions that did not necessarily call for greater funding from the state. This included discussions regarding joint use/funding of existing park and rides, looking at city policies regarding parking and the use of other existing lots as park and rides. Review of federal and city restrictions may be necessary to remove barriers to use. The benefits of allowing private providers to use or lease space at park-and-rides was also discussed, which was supported by those who were involved in special event transportation. In addition, a suggestion was made to consider intermodal connectivity outside of traditional transit modes.

Possible technology innovations could be useful for better integration, especially improving connectivity between bus and ferry passengers.

There is a need to better understand changing demographics and land use decision impacts on public transportation. This includes looking at how health care changes and the needs of elderly populations are changing.

Phase 1 – Research and Analysis

The PB team then gave a series of presentations providing background and summarizing beginning research in three key topic areas: Existing State Role; Unmet Public Transportation Needs and Performance Management. Sheila Dezarn began the discussion by outlining that states generally serve four types of functions.

- Policy – planning – leadership
- Direct involvement in providing services and/or facilities
- Funding
- Oversight – coordination

This overview was followed by presentations and discussion in each research area.

The Existing State Role: PB researcher Allison Dobbins presented initial findings in this area. She discussed federal requirements and related state-supported services/programs, legislation, and policies. The state's current activities are broad and include activities in each state functional area. The state plays an active role in policy and planning; it operates elements of the public transportation network including the Ferry and HOV systems; it manages some federal grants, authorizes taxing options for local and regional transit providers; it provides some direct state funding for capital and operational needs; and finally, it provides coordination services and some monitoring.

Discussion following this covered a number of areas. This included discussion regarding state policies, economic development and funding as the drivers of public transportation interests.

GMA/CTR

- It was suggested that the team review GMA policies and/or reports regarding Facilities of Statewide Significance as a resource to identifying needs related to overall mobility
- State facility siting decisions through GSA should be reviewed for accessibility to public transportation
- Legislation encourages reduction in vehicle use and promotes better land use integration and use of non motorized solutions
- Better support for employer programs to encourage other modes of travel to work

Economic Development

- Look at how investment in public transportation can lead to development and target support to these types of investments
- Look at MPO/RTPO plans for linkages between public transportation investments and economic development initiatives

Funding

- Review the funding split between federal/state/local programs
- New federal opportunities such as Livable Communities Initiative and Veterans Transportation

- Look at revised grant criteria that focuses on objectives such as reduced VMT and/or sustainable communities
- Development of cooperative purchase programs for multiple agencies

Finally, there were general comments made about the use of facilities, and that programs should focus on improving bus services into and around urban areas. Urban transportation bus systems are the largest provider of services.

Unmet Needs: PB researcher Larry Sauve also presented his initial review of documents that outlines unmet needs in public transportation. This research topic provided a review of current types of public transportation programs, a review of current funding options, and a discussion of emerging issues and trends. Emerging issues and trends included:

- Recession – effects of sales tax declines on operating revenues and the deferral of capital programs
- Roadway capacity expansion limitations in urban areas are leading to greater emphasis on public transit
- State policies that increase demand for public transportation such as recent Green House Gas and Commute Trip Reduction legislation requiring reduction in vehicle miles of travel statewide
- Demographic trends of an aging population that is tending to move to rural areas

Key comments included:

- Revenue shortfalls in the near term can affect a funding stream for years to come
- We need to understand the split between dollars needed for capital versus those necessary for ongoing operations
- CTR is a good example of public/private contribution that results in an 18:1 return on investment
- There is a difference between addressing needs of the voluntary rider versus the needs of a transit-dependent rider

There were questions regarding overlapping services, especially between different state programs and if there were better ways to coordinate and use dollars more effectively. An example could be yellow school bus services and public transit services that often serve a similar market.

Performance Management: PB researcher Lauren Isaac began the discussion by defining what performance management is, how it links to goals and how states use performance management in planning, operational, and funding decisions. She noted that there are differences between the ways a state might use performance management versus how transit agencies choose to monitor performance. She highlighted Washington State's transportation goals, which include:

- Economic Vitality
- Preservation
- Safety
- Mobility
- Environment
- Stewardship

Washington reports its performance management in the “Gray Notebook,” Transit Development Plans (TDPs), and the Summary of Public Transportation. This discussion was followed by a presentation from Jim Jacobsen of King County Metro on how King County Metro monitors performance and why.

Comments focused on the need to develop metrics that could be comparable across the state and integrated with the rest of the state. Some concepts proposed included amount of service per capita; amount of service per riders served; or asset utilization.

Range of State Roles

As an introduction to the next workshop, Jeff Morales, Senior PB Advisor, gave an overview of what other states are doing in terms of involvement in public transportation. He reviewed the levels of involvement of a number of states in public transportation including: Maryland, Virginia, and Texas. This provided a spectrum of possible state involvement levels that range from limited involvement in Texas to very active and direct in Maryland.

Comment and Follow-up

The panel had an opportunity to voice additional comments and questions after the presentations. There was a comment regarding a possible difference between what is “needed” versus “wanted” to meet public transportation goals. This generated an additional comment that the state is also in the same financial situation of reduced revenues due to the recession and the lack of “deep pockets” to meet all needs.

There was a general observation that there should be some serious review to assess the ability for public transportation to address state policies.

There was some question regarding the public perception of the need for public transportation and that there may be more education necessary to really emphasize the role public transportation plays in the overall state network. This generated a comment that when looking at that picture that some elements and measures will not apply to all agencies and the local options should be allowed.

Finally, there were clarifying questions regarding the process moving forward.

- Will the state provide direction on goals or will the panel have some input? The panel’s role is to suggest possible goals that fit within the overall state transportation framework. It was reiterated that it is not the goal for the panel to agree on all aspects of the suggestions given to the state. We will strive to reach agreement where possible, but the primary goal is to gain input on the things the state should take into consideration as it discusses its future role.
- What is the ability to engage the public? Future meetings will include a public comment period.

Meeting was adjourned after a short discussion on the possible dates for the next workshop.