



# JOINT TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE

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September 16, 2005

TO: Members, Senate and House Transportation Committees

SUBJECT: Joint Transportation Committee Update

We wanted to keep you informed of activities of the newly formed Joint Transportation Committee.

There was significant change in transportation during the 2005 Session, including elimination of the twenty-four member Legislative Transportation Committee. While most of the LTC functions had been transferred to the standing committees, many legislators felt that it was important to retain the transportation research and administrative support capacity of a joint committee. To retain the ability to conduct important study efforts and to support Transportation Committee member participation in collaborative and educational efforts, the four-member Joint Transportation Committee was established.

The new committee has undertaken several tasks, including several study mandates as set forth in the Transportation Budget and described in the attached report. The Committee has met twice to organize its activities, approving a budget, by-laws, and a work plan. The committee intends to complete a Passenger-Only Ferry Study by November 30, 2005 and a review of the Motor Vehicle Excise Tax by January 2006. The attached summary reflects Committee actions to date, which we trust you will find informative.

We intend to provide Senate and House Transportation Committee members with regular updates on JTC activities. Please provide us with 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 Dan Swecker

Representative Beverly Woods

## **Joint Transportation Committee: September 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 transportation 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 met twice since being established July 1, 2005. At its first meeting on July 20th, the Committee adopted operating procedures; approved an initial work plan; adopted its budget, and approved staffing. The Committee's focus is to work closely with the House and Senate Standing Committees on Transportation to address issues important to both committees. Diane Schwickerath was named JTC Coordinator, and Gene Baxstrom was named Policy Analyst (half-time). JTC staff is working closely with standing committee staff.

The Committee again met on August 29<sup>th</sup> to review progress on interim work elements. The JTC also adopted policies to support activities of House and Senate Transportation Committee members, including service on advisory committees, and support for other activities assigned to Transportation Committee members.

**JTC Studies and 2005-2006 Interim Work Plan:** Section 205 of the Transportation Budget (ESSB 6091) 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, taking in account long-term viability of different service providers, cost to ferry passenger, state subsidies required, and federal funding availability;
- Guided by an 18-member steering committee of stakeholders, including four legislative members--Senators Spanel & Oke and Reps. Woods & McDermott;
- Task Force meetings were held on August 29<sup>th</sup> and Sept. 13<sup>th</sup>, with five or six additional meetings scheduled through November;
- Facilitator contracted to organize meetings and facilitate development of recommendations;
- A report due to the HTC and STC by November 30, 2005.

#### **Motor Vehicle Excise Tax (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);
- Includes participants from Sound Transit, an RTPO, DOT, AG's office, DOL and the financial community;
- Staff working groups are evaluating legal and contractual issues and methodologies for setting vehicle value and alternative depreciation methods;
- Goal is to have recommendations available for 2006 Session.

#### 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 scoping will occur this fall, and it is anticipated that a contract will be awarded in early 2006;
- Study results are due to the fiscal committees in November, 2006.

#### Review of Transportation Budgeting Methodologies and Processes:

- Examine the budgeting process and the program structure of the Department of Transportation;
- Up to \$250,000 is provided for consulting expertise and OFM and transportation agencies will be involved;
- No mandated date, but the objective is to let a contract in late 2005, with study completed by June 2006, for use in agency budget development.

**Other policy-related issues of interest to JTC:** While not 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/or to the Legislature;
- JTC is monitoring study activities, which are to include contact with stakeholders in October, a draft report in November and a final report in December, 2005.

#### Support for Regional Transportation forums:

- JTC has committed up to \$10,000 to match Puget Sound Regional Council support for forums trying to reach agreement on any reform needed for the Regional Transportation Investment District. This effort was requested by legislative members.

#### Other activities:

- Statutory clean-up: identify any statutes that need to be amended to account for JTC's role in transportation (old references to LTC, role of JTC, etc.).
- 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 (none scheduled to date).
- 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:
  - Sunsetting of the Legislative Transportation Committee continues and will continue until at least January 2006.
  - JTC new agency infrastructure set-up is complete and functioning.
  - Transfer of Transportation Performance Audit Board staff and assets from the Legislative Transportation Committee to the Transportation Commission has been completed.