

INDEPENDENT REVIEW: TRANSPORTATION IMPACTS OF LOWER SNAKE RIVER
DAM REMOVAL

*1st Quarterly Report
Joint Transportation Committee of the Washington State Legislature
September 30, 2024*

Submitted by:

Eric Jessup (Principal Investigator)

Research Professor
School of Economic Sciences
Washington State University
301C Hulbert Hall
Pullman, WA 99164-6420
Ph: 509-335-4987
eric_jessup@wsu.edu

Jake Wagner (Co-Principal Investigator)

Assistant Research Professor
School of Economic Sciences
Washington State University
301G Hulbert Hall
Pullman, WA 99164-6420
Ph: 509-335-2115
jake.wagner@wsu.edu

Libby Ogard

President
Prime Focus LLC
918 Fox River Drive
DePere, WI 54115
Ph: 920-217-7222
logard@primefocusllc.com

Submitted to:

Dave Catterson

Coordinator
Joint Transportation Committee
Ph: 360-786-7398
dave.catterson@leg.wa.gov

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The independent review of the WSDOT Transportation Impacts of Lower Snake River Dam Removal has resulted in the following key summary findings.

- The information flow and data sharing between the two teams has been excellent. The leadership of both efforts have been fully engaged, cooperative, collaborative, and collegial in all aspects of both efforts.
- Through regular meetings and email exchanges the JTC team has shared significant concerns about the grain transportation model construction and assumptions with the WSDOT team. These concerns included:
 - Objective function being shortest path vs minimize total transportation cost
 - Model constraints
 - Route alternatives available and model flexibility
 - Static (constant) transportation cost for rail and truck
 - Origination points
- Partially in response to the concerns expressed by the JTC independent review team the WSDOT team delayed public presentation of model outputs.
- The WSDOT team has addressed most of the modeling issues above and is committed to development of a model that accurately reflects transportation movements throughout the region.
- The JTC consultant team has convened the River Transportation Work Group. The Work Group has been engaged through interviews and meetings, and they have been helpful providing data and information to both the JTC and WSDOT teams. As the WSDOT team rolls out deliverables we anticipate more comments on the process, and products such as the transportation model output that shows current commodity/freight flows in the Snake and Columbia Rivers region.

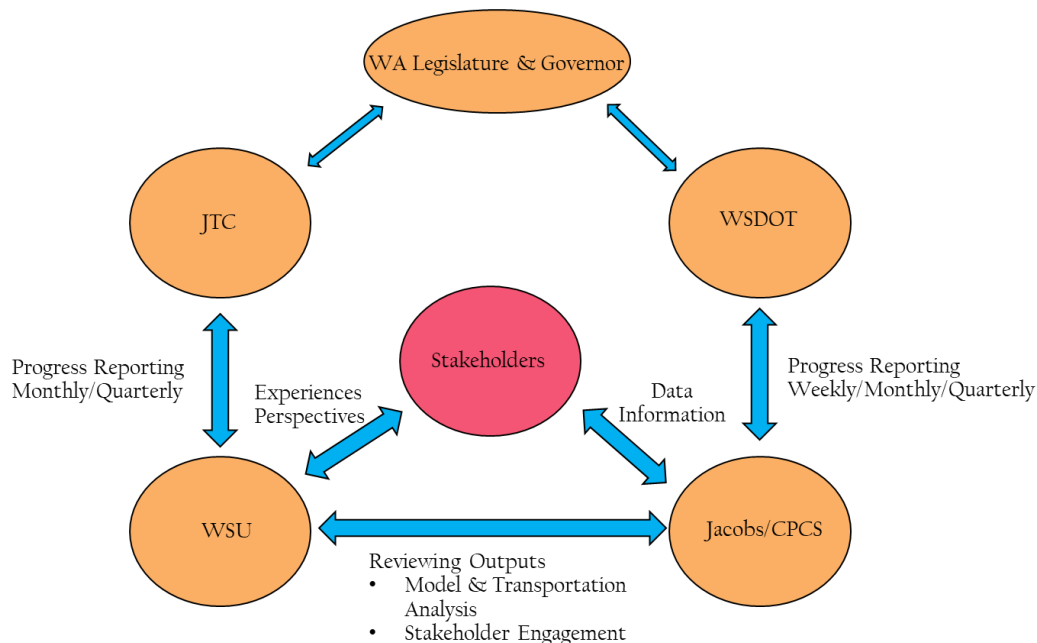
INTRODUCTION

This report documents activities throughout the last three months (June, July, August 2024) associated with the independent review being conducted by Freight Policy Transportation Institute at Washington State University for the Joint Transportation Committee. This review evaluates activities being undertaken by the collection of consulting firms (Jacobs Engineering, CPCS, & others) under the direction of the Washington State Department of Transportation (Jim Mahugh) for the Transportation Impacts of Lower Snake River Dam Removal Study. The review is segmented into three primary activities, including 1) establishing information sharing/collaboration plan, 2) the review of modeling activities by the WSDOT team and 3) the stakeholder engagement component for both teams.

INFORMATION SHARING & COLLABORATION

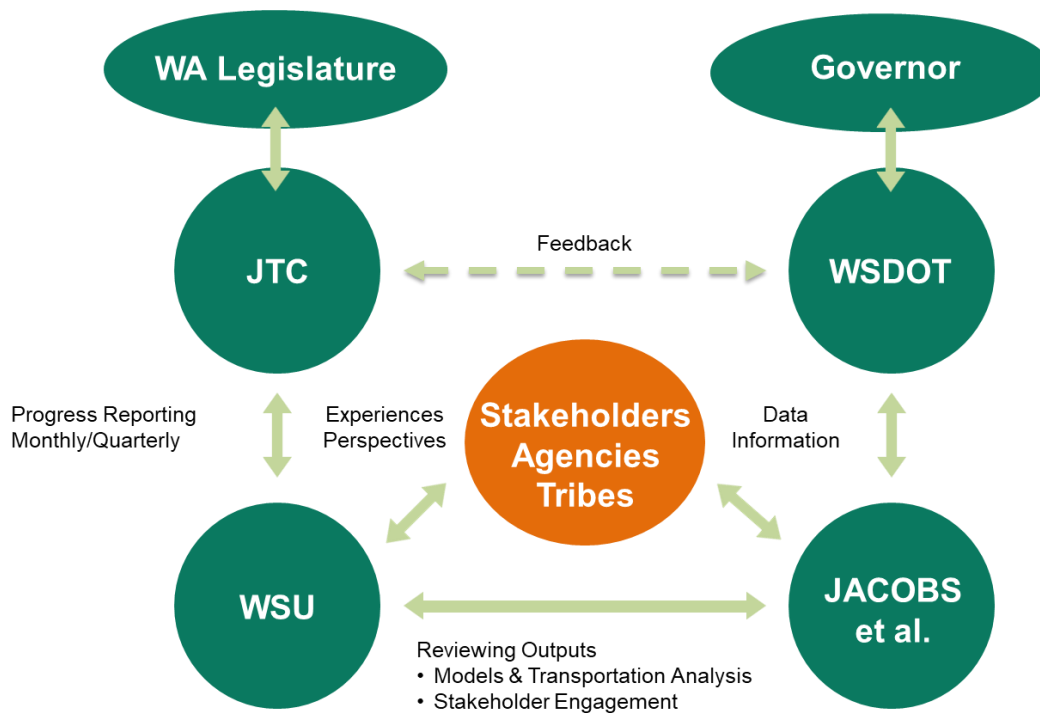
The WSDOT and JTC teams met in May to discuss how the two teams would function in terms of data and information sharing. These meetings were informal and collegial with both teams being focused on working together to produce the best possible outcomes and achieve the respective work tasks and scope laid out within the contracts. Both teams were invited to present a brief update to the JTC at their scheduled meeting in Vancouver, WA on June 18th. In preparation for that meeting and to graphically display the distinct differences between the two efforts, the WSU teams proposed the following graphic which was also utilized at the update meeting in Vancouver, WA.

Figure 1: Proposed Communication Flow from WSU



The WSDOT team ultimately modified that graphic slightly (Figure 2) and this graphic has been the one utilized for presentation to different stakeholder groups.

Figure 2: Adapted Communication Flow from WSDOT



It is our assessment that the two teams have operated well together, sharing information and data to achieve the goals of the two separate efforts. The WSDOT teams have included the JTC teams on all the outreach meetings with respective stakeholders over the months of June, July and August and likewise shared presentation documents. The two teams have also met bi-weekly with the USACE in developing their study scope and lastly, the two teams have also met (initially bi-weekly, then weekly) regarding the total logistics cost modeling development. The WSDOT team also scheduled a tour of facilities in Eastern Washington in August and invited the JTC team to join. Unfortunately given that WSU classes began that same period and also the familiarity of those facilities by the WSU team, neither Jake Wagner or Eric Jessup participated in that tour. Dave Catterson did join that tour.

TRANSPORTATION MODELING ACTIVITIES

The two teams began having bi-weekly meetings focused on the total logistics cost model June 13th. The first several (4) meetings primarily focused on data collection efforts by the WSDOT team. The JTC team expected to focus upon the actual model, but no details were provided in the first four meetings. Given the expected timelines on when the WSDOT team was planning to show the results of this model,

the JTC team emailed Jim Mahugh on July 13th to raise this concern. The next meeting on July 25th, the JTC team raised again many questions regarding the model. Following that meeting on July 26th, Dike Ahanotu emailed the JTC team to ask that we put those questions in writing so that the WSDOT team could respond to those specifically. A copy of those initial questions and the subsequent follow-up are in the appendix. The two most notable concerns of this exchange included:

- The initial model presented was not mathematically correct, including summation over parameters that didn't exist
- The objective function did not solve for minimizing total transportation cost, but rather a two-stage shortest path algorithm (Dijkstras)
- Model included originations from townships that possessed no grain production
- Limited alternative route choices

Ultimately, the WSDOT team agreed to share the actual model code (after NDA's were signed by WSU). Over the next several modeling calls, modification to the total logistics transportation model were incorporated based upon feedback from the JTC team. The WSDOT team delayed presenting outcomes of that model to the technical stakeholder group, instead deciding to first have an information/input call with the stakeholders on August 30th and then presenting outputs of the model on September 13th.

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

The JTC established the River Transportation Working group, representing navigation interest on the Lower Snake River. A comprehensive list of 58 participants have been included in the River Transportation Working Group (RTWG) which represents public and private stakeholders who actively leverage the river in its current state to support their livelihoods. A draft communication plan for the JTC was drafted to identify key communication objectives and the organization of the monthly River Transportation Working Group activities.

A kick-off meeting was held June 28th with this group to discuss the purpose of the working group and key issues and organizational issues as we begin this investigation.

A website was designed by Washington State University to capture feedback about the process and team interactions during the study. This website was discussed during the kick-off meeting and a link has been included in each meeting invitation. During each RTWG meeting attendees are encouraged to register comments and experiences on the RTWG website. Because these comments are typically in response to presentations and activities completed by the WSDOT team, it is in the early stages of adaptation.

During June and July, the JTC outreach person, Libby Ogard participated in 22 stakeholder consultations and noted concerns and specific areas of emphasis each stakeholder identified.

The August 2nd webinar focused on modeling and various modeling considerations so that the attendees would have a framework to think about the Total Logistics Cost Modeling presentation in August and September. The September monthly update meeting was pushed to September 20th due to the delay in

the WSDOT team presenting outputs from the model. This meeting will focus on stakeholder reactions to the current conditions modeling effort and will discuss modeling process satisfaction and areas of concerns about accuracy and completeness.

Overall, this group has been engaged and collaborative and cooperating in every opportunity to provide data and information to both the WSDOT and JTC teams. The only overriding theme from this group is the frustration of having to deal with the Snake River Dam issues over the years and the items not included in the scope (from the initial proviso). But the group continues to be involved and collaborative.

Moving forward with WSDOT deliverables starting to materialize we anticipate more website activities and comments about the process, accuracy of data visualization and completeness in capturing existing conditions. Initially we are hearing concerns about economic impact considerations which are outside the scope of the JTC study. This issue has been reported in joint calls with the leadership team and is being addressed.

The RTWG team is an evergreen organization which is growing in popularity, and we continue to add stakeholders to the monthly webinars. The conversation is lively, and attendance has been good considering the summer timeframe. While we anticipated short meetings of 30 minutes each until we get actionable content for review, we have been meeting for nearly one hour each meeting which is encouraging. The format for these calls provides 1) a review of WSDOT deliverables 2) a forward looking brief discussion of the next deliverable and 3) general comments about the overall effort and up coming meetings.