

ISLAND REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PLANNING ORGANIZATION (IRTPO) EXECUTIVE BOARD

MINUTES OF THE MEETING

June 23, 2021

Executive Board Member/Seat Attendance List:

Chair: Commissioner Melanie Bacon, Island County
Vice Chair: Commissioner Curt Gordon, POSW
Commissioner Janet St. Clair, Island County
Commissioner Jill Johnson, Island County
Commissioner Mohammad Mostafavinassab,
Port of Coupeville
Blaine Oborn, Administrator, City of Oak Harbor
Jay Drye, WSDOT
Mayor Molly Hughes, Town of Coupeville
Director Todd Morrow, Island Transit
Patricia Love, City of Stanwood
Brian Tyhuis, NAS Whidbey
Councilwoman Beth Munns, Island Transit
(City of Oak Harbor)
Ray Deardorf, WSF

Members not in Attendance:

Mayor of Langley
Sharon Sappington, EDC

Guests:

Stan Reeves, Port of South Whidbey
Todd Carlson, WSDOT
Henry Rood, Island County Planning

Presenter:

Cliff Hall, WSDOT

Staff:

Bill Oakes, IRTPO Director
Susan Driver, IRTPO Planner

Commissioner Bacon, Chair, called the meeting to order at 11:01 am

1. Approval of Agenda

Commissioner Johnson requested an addition to the agenda to discuss 1) changes to the Sharpes Corner roundabout, and 2) reduction in ferry service between Coupeville and Port Townsend. Councilwoman Munns made a motion to approve the agenda as amended. Second by Commissioner Johnson. All yeas, motion passed.

2. Minutes of May 26, 2021

Commissioner Gordon made a motion to approve the Minutes of May 26, 2021, as presented. Second by Councilwoman Munns. All yeas, motion passed.

3. RTPO 101

Cliff Hall of the Tribal and Regional Integrated Planning Office of WSDOT gave a presentation on the roles and responsibilities of RTPOs as identified in Washington State RCW 47.80.020 and WAC 468-86-020. The presentation will be made available on the IRTPO meetings page.

4. Title VI

The Title VI Plan and Assurances were presented to the Board for review in previous meetings. Commissioner Gordon made a motion to adopt the plan. Second by Councilwoman Munns. All yeas, motion passed.

5. Discussion of WSDOT/WSF critical corridor changes

Commissioner Johnson addressed the issue of changes to the Sharpes Corner roundabout without notice or coordination. She reminded the WSDOT representatives that there was significant public input when the roundabout was designed, but lack of notice regarding any changes. She stated that this was a trust disaster. There was no coordination with the local agencies or the IRTPO. There was a press release on Friday and the changes were implemented on Monday. The project was complete by Tuesday, but the notice did not come out in the local paper until Wednesday. She asked Bill Oakes to discuss the changes.

Mr. Oakes showed an illustration of the roundabout and described how the two lanes entering the roundabout westbound that went around and up the hill toward Oak Harbor had been reduced to one. The outside lane had been changed to a through lane to Anacortes. The far right fly-away lane still bypassed the roundabout toward Anacortes.

Commissioner asked Mr. Drye to explain how eliminating the outside lane makes this roundabout safer. She stated that she always drove in the outside lane as the safer option of the two. She also asked why there was no outreach to stakeholders.

Mr. Drye indicated that the traffic office had been working on resolving issues at this roundabout and considered it a technical revision, rather than a capital project. He stated that reducing the two lanes going around the roundabout to one lane reduced the potential for conflict at the merge point. Drivers traveling eastbound from Anacortes would not have to watch two lanes of traffic for an opportunity to merge.

Todd Morrow added that Island Transit was not informed of the project and had scrambled to re-train drivers to switch from driving transit buses in the outside lane to the inner lane. He stated that the roundabout had plenty of room, so it shouldn't be a problem, but it was an unexpected adjustment.

Commissioner Johnson reiterated that this was a significant communication failure on the part of WSDOT.

Mayor Hughes then addressed the issue of the Coupeville/Port Townsend ferry run. She stated WSF had originally made notification that the second boat for this route would be late. (Only one boat runs during the winter, the second boat generally starts in the spring.) She said they were notified on this week that there would be no second boat. No discussion. No warning. She stated that the Coupeville/Port Townsend ferry route is an important extension of our highway system and our economy, and we were totally caught off guard.

Mr. Deardorf responded that WSF has had issues with vessel availability and crewing availability. Due to the pandemic, they have had to train crew in smaller groups, so it is taking longer. WSF officials thought the system would be on track for a second boat by June 20, but crew shortages have been disruptive to services. He stated that WSF does not know when they will be able to provide a second boat, but right

now they just don't have the resources to do it. He noted that the Executive Team had met Tuesday morning to discuss the issue and made the decision.

Mayor Hughes stated that if Coupeville/Port Townsend was going to be stuck with only one boat. WSF should make sure that boat never misses a sailing and runs as many times per day as possible.

Commissioner St. John asked Mr. Deardorf if he saw any relief in the future regarding the transportation budgets. She stated that WSF has been underfunded for some time and hoped that this would change.

Mr. Deardorf responded that WSF did not get the funding requested in the Governor's budget proposal.

Commissioner Gordon suggested that the IRTPO Board needs to outline the issue and get a letter together for the Chair to sign. The legislators need to understand the level of service issues.

Commissioner Gordon turned his suggestion into a motion for the Chair to sign a letter from the Board. Commissioner St. John seconded. All yeas, (Mr. Drye abstained), motion passed.

6. Tabled Discussions

Due to the length of discussion in item five, the discussion of the RTP and HSTP plan update and the discussion of the UPWP amendment were tabled. Susan will send out an email with information and details, so the Board will be prepared to take action in July.

7. Member update roundtable

Commissioner Bacon stated that 60 minutes is not enough time for these meetings. She asked members to send suggestions for changing to a 90 minute meeting going forward. Commissioner Gordon would like to move the meeting time to afternoon.

Todd Morrow suggested, related to the WSDOT/WSF critical corridor changes, that we create two letters, one for the Governor's Office and one for WSDOT. He also suggested that we try to get a meeting with each.

Mr. Drye shared that the contractor working on the Deception Pass Bridge had reached a milestone. The blasting and priming for the first half of the bridge is complete. They will continue cleaning up and painting, but will not begin work on the second half until after the Independence Day holiday.

Commissioner Bacon, Chair, Adjourned the meeting at 12:05 pm.

Next Meeting: July 28, 2021

Acronyms:

FHWA – Federal Highway Administration

HSTP – Human Services Transportation Plan

MOA – Memorandum of Agreement

MOU – Memorandum of Understanding

NAS – Naval Air Station

RTIP – Regional Transportation Improvement Program

RTP – Regional Transportation Plan

SFY – State Fiscal Year (July 1 – June 30)

STBG – Surface Transportation Block Grant

TAC – Technical Advisory Committee

TRIP – Tribal and Regional Integrated Planning

UPWP – Unified Planning Work Program

WSDOT – Washington State Department
of Transportation

WSF – Washington State Ferries