

Good Roads & Transportation

WSGRTA

Established in 1899

Inside this issue

- Toll Roads in the Future?** 2
- Intelligent Transportation** 2
- Name it "The Hulk?"** 4

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WSGRTA Membership Mtg. & Legislative Breakfast

Member Mtg.
7:00-8:30 PM
February 1

Legislative Breakfast
7:00 AM
February 2, 2005
Red Lion Olympia Hotel
(360) 943-4000
Olympia, Washington

Washington State Good Roads & Transportation Association

Legislative Breakfast Transportation Leadership Forum

The Washington State Good Roads & Transportation Association is proud to invite everyone to our Annual Legislative Breakfast.

The 2005 Legislative Breakfast is scheduled for Wednesday, February 2, 2005, from 7:00 a.m. to 8:30 a.m. at the Red Lion Olympia Hotel in Olympia. We take a short break just before 8:00 a.m. to allow those with other commitments to exit.

The Washington State Good Roads & Transportation Association hosts this event each year to provide our members with a first hand experience with our transportation leaders in the legislature and the Department of Transportation. As such, we have invited State Senator Mary Margaret Haugen, State Representative Ed Murray, and Secretary of Transportation Doug MacDonald as our speakers for the morning. We host this event annually to provide our policy makers with

the invaluable input and feedback from our diverse membership to assist them in making the most informed decisions on our state transportation problems.

We encourage everyone to take advantage of this opportunity to meet with individuals from around the state who care deeply about this states transportation system.

Please pass along the word to your associates that they are also welcome and invited to attend this event. You can contact our office at 206- 854-5078 or by email at gjhix@qwest.net for more details.

On behalf of Washington's oldest trade association involved in the transportation industry, I thank each of you for your dedication to making Washington the best place to live, work and raise our families. I look forward to seeing you on the 2nd of February.

Peter Coates



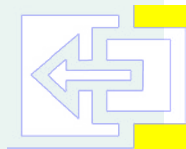
Senator Haugen



Rep. Murray



Sec. MacDonald



Jan 2005

Intelligent Transportation

OLYMPIA - Motorists calling the toll-free travel information line, 1-800-695-ROAD and the Seattle travel information line, (206) DOT-HIWAY, are now being directly connected to WSDOT's 511 travel information phone system.

"As people get used to this newer system, 511 will reduce the time necessary to get travel information," said Pete Briglia, State Intelligent Transportation Systems Engineer.

Briglia said not only is more extensive incident and construction delay information available on 511 than the current hotline numbers, but 511 is more closely aligned with the wealth of information that is available on WSDOT's Web site, www.wsdot.wa.gov. Another benefit is that 511 provides traffic congestion information around the clock (24/7).

WSDOT won't do away with the hotlines numbers anytime soon because the numbers have coverage throughout North America, allowing callers all over the country to get travel information about Washington State. Also, the hotline numbers have been in existence for a long time and callers who have always used that number may need time to adapt.

The 511 system offers touch-tone or voice-activated information. Travel topics include:

- Washington State Ferries
- Mountain pass conditions
- Roadway conditions in the state
- Construction information anywhere in the state
- Real-time traffic information for Seattle highways and I-5 in Central Tacoma
- 511 for Oregon
- Express lane status (for I-5 and I-90 in the Seattle area)
- Public transit, passenger rail, and airline telephone numbers
- Travel telephone numbers for adjacent states, provinces and cities
- Weather

WSDOT's Website offers more information about 511 including the background, statistics, and where it works. The site is located at: www.wsdot.wa.gov/traffic/511/

Coming Soon Toll Roads?

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Highway driving is set to take an even bigger toll on Washington commuters.

Faced with the high cost of building highways and the scarcity of federal, state and local dollars, local leaders are increasingly embracing the concept of tolls. After years of resisting the unpopular approach, the state's Legislature and business community now say tolls will have to be a part of major transportation projects in the future.

One state project, the Tacoma Narrows Bridge, already is set to start charging \$3 tolls in 2007, a fee that eventually will rise to \$6. And at least two other megaprojects, the replacements for the SR 520 floating bridge and the Alaskan Way Viaduct, will likely include tolls, as well. Early studies indicate tolls on 520 might range from 75 cents to \$4.60, depending on time of travel. Potential viaduct tolls are undetermined.

"There's no question that tolls will be a part of new infrastructure," said state Sen. Mary Margaret Haugen, D-Camano Island, chair of the Senate's transportation committee.

Haugen is already laying the groundwork. She introduced a housekeeping bill January 14 that amends a series of statutes, cleaning up language to make it easier to impose tolls when the time come.

Rep. Ed Murray, D-Seattle, chair of the House transportation committee, also says tolls are inevitable for the 520 bridge, the viaduct and other new projects.

"I think tolls are in the viaduct's future. Otherwise I don't see where we get the votes to raise the gas tax high enough to pay for it," Murray said.

Washington is considering adding tolls for the same reasons as other states, including California, Florida and Texas and

Georgia. State gas taxes aren't even close to keeping pace with needs. The federal government, struggling with a looming deficit, won't make up for state shortfalls, but Congress is expected to give states more authority to impose tolls on interstate highways. And evolving technology has made tolling cheaper and far more efficient: Instead of scraping together loose change and stopping at a tollbooth to pay an operator, future commuters are expected to cruise through electronic stations without slowing as in-car transponders handle payment.

Commuters, fed up with congestion, also seem more willing to accept tolls – at least in some regards. “Tolls seem to resonate with respondents to polls and focus groups, because it is the epitome of a user fee,” said Steve Leahy, president and CEO of Greater Seattle Chamber of Commerce and one of three co-chairs of the Transportation Partnership, a group of business and labor leaders lobbying Olympia for more funds and funding options for transportation.

Exactly how tolls will be received by Washington residents is far from clear. Officials believe that toll proposals, which met with fierce opposition in the early 1990s, might be better accepted by the public now. But it's likely, officials concede, that many drivers would object to paying tolls, or support the concept but consider particular tolls too high. In Texas and Georgia, proposals to start charging tolls on certain existing roadways have met with fierce opposition.

Tolls not only provide funding, but help manage demand, advocates say. If some drivers change their behavior to avoid paying tolls, perhaps choosing transit or other options, the drivers who choose to pay the toll have a faster, less congested trip.

The Legislature now appears likely to approve a pilot project to put High-Occupancy Toll lanes – open to high occupancy vehicles and solo drivers who pay a toll – on SR 167, following the lead of several other states. The Puget Sound Regional Council will also launch a pilot program this year that will study how congestion-based tolling affects demand.

Tolls are not a panacea: Sources say most big projects

in the Puget Sound area will have to be funded by a combination of tolls, federal dollars, state funds from an increased gas tax, and local money from a funding package put together by the Regional Transportation Investment District or its equivalent.

But tolls are expected to be a significant funding tool in the future. The best example may be the Tacoma Narrows Bridge, which many believe would not have been built for decades were it not for tolls. The state pitched in \$50 million in the project's early development, but the other \$800 million of the total project cost will be funded by tolls, starting at \$3 in 2007 and stepping up to \$6 through 2030.

Sources say tolls work best on projects like the Tacoma Narrows Bridge, where there are few alternative routes.

For the 520 floating bridge, tolls would likely make up less than half of the cost. Current cost estimates for the two alternatives being studied range from a low end of \$1.7 billion for the four-lane option to a high end of \$2.9 billion for the six-lane option.

According to preliminary studies, tolls could contribute about \$700 million meaning they would cover roughly 25 percent to 40 percent of the 520 project's cost.

A preliminary study says commuters would likely pay from 75 cents to \$4.60 per crossing, paying more during rush hour and less at off-peak times.

The study anticipates that roughly one-fifth to one-third of commuters might take alternative routes to avoid a toll, such as going north around Lake Washington or via I-90.

An abundance of nearby alternative routes make it more challenging to impose tolls on a replacement for the Alaskan Way Viaduct. A preliminary 2002 study said tolls on the viaduct alone might collect roughly \$6 million to \$15 million per year, which could be leveraged into capital investment purchasing power of \$35 million to \$95 million – a small sum compared with the total cost of the \$4.1 billion tunnel option.

But Maureen Sullivan, project manager with the DOT, said further studies might identify other tolling scenarios that could raise additional funds.

To move ahead, projects would require a more thorough

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“investment-grade” analysis to produce revenue projections that bond buyers would feel comfortable with, a study that might cost \$500,000 or so.

Huagen and Murray said they hope to move bills on 520 and the viaduct replacement this session. Both the Legislature and the business community have expressed a sense of urgency about getting transportation improvements under way.

“What I sense from our members is that we’ve horsed around with this problem for long enough,” said Don Brunell, president of the Association of Washington Business, the state’s oldest and largest business association. “There’s a high level of frustration – a lot of it is businesses who can’t move goods and services around.”

And of course, there are well-known safety issues on the viaduct and on 520, soon to be the oldest floating bridge in the state.

“By the time you get the design done and the funding under way, we’re already very close to the end of its life,” said Sullivan. “That clock is ticking.”

Have They Named it The Hulk?

HYAK -Saving time, saving money, reducing frustration - that’s the idea behind the Washington State Department of Transportation’s (WSDOT) newest addition to the Incident Response program. It’s called IRxtreme - a high-powered truck that will push stalled semis and keep traffic flowing on I-90 at Snoqualmie Pass. Transportation crews will use the IRxtreme to free up the pass when a semi-truck gets “stuck” on Snoqualmie Pass. A disk of digital photos depicting the problems (the weather, the backups, etc.) on Snoqualmie pass will be available.

On January 27th at 10 a.m. representatives from WSDOT, the Washington State Patrol, and the Washington Trucking Associations will be available to give individual interviews and answer questions about how IRX will relieve problems associated with disabled semis on the pass. The location is the Hyak WSDOT Maintenance Shed located at Snoqualmie Pass, exit 54 off Interstate 90.

Each winter, extreme weather conditions combined with heavy volumes over Snoqualmie Pass creates huge congestion problems when semi-trucks are unable to keep moving. IRX will be able to respond immediately to the scene to clear the road and keep traffic moving. This addition to the Incident Response program is a

proven success at Donner Pass in California, and will add to WSDOT’s already successful fleet of Incident Response vehicles.



\$ Dues are Due \$
Please check your records and
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