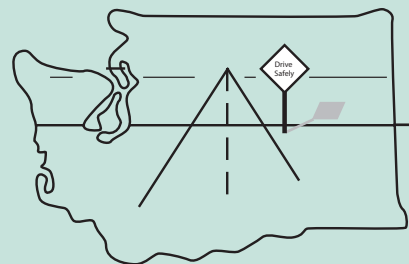


Good Roads & Transportation



WSGRTA

Established in 1899

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President: Bill Garing

President Elect: Jim Tobin

Past President: Ken Nelson

Secretary: Mark Kushner

Treasurer: Robert Schuster

Executive Admin: Carrie Hay

Editor: Ken Nelson

**108th
Annual Conference**
Sept 20 & 21
Bremerton
**Kitsap Conference
Center**

Meeting Schedule

July 19th - Ellensburg

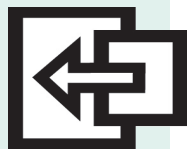
108th Annual Conference

Sept 20 & 21 Bremerton

November 15th - Ellensburg

2008 Legislative Breakfast

February 1, 2008



July 2007

Message From the President

As I sit down to write this I am listening to the weather forecast for the 4th and am thinking that it is a rare occasion to have such a positive forecast for this part of July. By the time you read this it will all be history, but just the same I hope that you had a glorious and safe holiday.

On Sunday, July 1st, the third installment of the nine cent gas tax increase went into affect and the Seattle media was doing anything but putting a positive spin on it. This baffles me, because you certainly don't have to look very far to see the positive aspects of the nickel and nine cent increases to the gasoline tax. The Department of Transportation has responded effectively in meeting the goals established by the Legislature and I am confident that they will continue to do so. I am able to see a couple of small examples of the work accomplished as I drive SR 202 from Redmond Ridge to Snoqualmie Ridge to help care for my 7-month old grandson (a positive aspect of being retired). These projects are a much-needed overlay from the Snoqualmie River to the junction with SR 203, and the addition of a roundabout at the SR 202 and SR 203 intersection. That intersection is very tricky to negotiate due to high traffic volumes and limited sight distance and is a good application of roundabout design.

Secretary Doug McDonald recently announced his resignation from the Department of Transportation. I am sure that you will all agree that Doug has brought some positive changes to the Department and has led them through some exciting times. I hope that you will join me in wishing Doug the best in his future endeavors. I hope to be able to report on the progress being made on finding a new Secretary for DOT in a future newsletter.

Earlier this year, Gloria Hix resigned as the Executive Administrator of our association and in March we hired Carrie Hay to replace Gloria. At our April meeting, I introduced her to those in attendance and welcomed her into the fold. I again want to extend my welcome to Carrie in this more formal way and acknowledge the

fine work she has done in getting our website redesigned and up to date. I look forward to working with Carrie. Our annual meeting is fast approaching and Jay Spady has done a remarkable job in making all of the needed arrangements. The meeting will be held on September 19th and 20th in Bremerton. I hope that you will be able to attend. Have a wonderful summer.

Bill Garing



Governor Gregoire speaks to the membership at the 2007 Legislative Breakfast

OLYMPIA - Governor Chris Gregoire has announced the appointment of Paula Hammond as Interim Secretary for the Washington Department of Transportation (WSDOT). Hammond is currently the chief of staff at WSDOT. The appointment is effective August 1.

"The completion of the Tacoma Narrows Bridge is a great opportunity to celebrate all that Doug MacDonald has done for Washingtonians and also to focus on the best way to continue his work," said Governor Gregoire. "Paula Hammond has been an anchor for the achievements at WSDOT for a number of years. She is the perfect leader for this transition period."

"I thank Gov. Gregoire for her confidence in me and the department," said Hammond. "Our agency is in a great place due to Doug MacDonald's hard work and leadership. I expect everyone at WSDOT to continue the momentum we've achieved on project delivery, communication and accountability."

TO TOLL OR NOT TO TOLL THAT IS THE QUESTION

There has been a lot of discussion about tolls lately, and there is going to be a lot more. It's not a simple matter. I will attempt to at least list the variables that need to be considered, and end with my opinion.

Do we need tolls? It sure looks that way. The need for road and transportation improvement always seems to outstrip the funds available. The nickel increase a few years ago is taking care of basics; mainly safety and preservation. The additional 9 cents now available will do some capacity improvement and even a start on some needed mega-projects. But it won't finish them, and as time goes by more needs will become apparent.

When the need is urgent, we have always resorted to borrowing. Borrowing increases the total cost by the amount of interest that will eventually be paid by future taxpayers. This decreases the amount available to take care of future needs. Is that a problem? Usually it is, because even if you factor in inflation and more cars on the road, there will be less money available for improvements. Inflation seems to affect the cost of construction more than the cost of money. Tolling is a way of paying that debt without depleting that basic source of funds - the gas tax. Fifty years ago, the gas tax was about 25% of the cost of fuel while today it's about 15%. And cars don't use as much gas today as they did then! Fifty years ago, most of our roads were two-lane. Six million people need a lot more capacity than two million.

A couple other things to consider are the increased cost and inconvenience of collecting the tolls and the ease of bypassing the toll facility (and causing more congestion on parallel routes). Thanks to transponders, this cost of collecting is decreasing and existing law does not allow a toll facility that can be easily bypassed. This makes economic sense even without the law.

A cost that may not be obvious is the congestion cost of doing nothing. Getting the needed work done now may trump any or all the negative aspects of tolling. In my opinion, tolling must be part of our tools for decreasing (or at least not increasing) congestion. **Bob Schuster, Treasurer**

Tacoma Narrows Bridge Opens to Traffic

The Tacoma Narrows Bridge has been a choke point for commuters and vacationers for a long time. This project to build a new \$700 M bridge was a long time in development, and utilized some creative construction practices. Over 3.5M hours of labor were spent on the bridge, with an admirable safety record. With a center span of 2800 feet this is one of the largest suspension bridges built since the Verranzo Narrows bridge in New York in 1964.

One of the unique aspects of the new bridge is the use of electronic toll transponders, over 100,000 of them have been issued to motorists. This allows commuters to bypass the traditional toll booths and greatly assists with the improvements in mobility this project provides. More information at: <http://www.thenewtribune.com/front/topphoto/story/111038.html>

Washington Drivers Conserve Gas

Washington Drivers are using less gas. Consumption is at the lowest level since 1968. Similiar to the oil cartel crunch of the 70's people have reacted to rising prices of fuel by modifying their driving habits. Drivers are making concious use of their transportation, fewer long drives, using the most efficient cars for drives, reducing non essential trips, etc. We have heard it before, but once again reliance on the gas tax to fund transportation may have its days numbered. More info at:

http://seattlepi.nwsourc.com/transportation/322909_gas09.html

WSDOT Quarterly Performance

The Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) released its quarterly performance report, The Gray Notebook: Measures, Markers and Mileposts. This edition includes annual performance reports for aviation, highway maintenance, and freight. In addition, the Gray Notebook provides quarterly reports on worker safety, workforce levels and training, highway safety, incident response, travel information, rail, and ferries. The March 31 edition covers the first quarter of 2007 and is now available on the WSDOT website: www.wsdot.wa.gov/accountability.

The Gray Notebook's Beige Pages presents a quarterly assessment of WSDOT's capital project delivery programs, offering a summarized 'roll-up' for 2003 Nickel and 2005 Transportation Partnership Account (TPA) funded highway construction projects. (continued page 4)

SR 240 Opens

On June 7th, WSDOT celebrated the SR 240 – Tri-Cities Additional Lanes project with a ribbon cutting ceremony near the Richland Wye Roundabout. The project constructed additional lanes on SR 240 between Richland and Kennewick, linking Interstate 182 with the US Department of Energy’s Hanford site, the Columbia Center commercial areas, and east Kennewick’s industrial zones. Using computer modeling, WSDOT estimated that traffic congestion would have averaged 3 hours a day by 2010 and 5 hours a day by 2020 with average afternoon travel speeds of 31-35 mph. By comparison, with the project built, congestion will be no more than one hour a day in 2020 and commuters will be able to travel at 55 mph.

Several key speakers emphasized the importance of the project, including State Representative Larry Haler, Mayor of Richland Rob Welch, Mayor of Kennewick Jim Beaver, WSDOT Regional Administrator Don Whitehouse and Mark Kushner, BFCG Transportation Director. Not only does this project improve the commute for motorists, but the bicyclists now have a better bike connection through the Tri-Cities. During construction, the alternate route was just too much for some bikers to endure and they were forced to drive their vehicles to work. Now that the project is completed, bicyclists can get back to their daily biking commute with a 12 ft. wide pedestrian and bike path along SR 240. “I thank WSDOT for restoring an important bicycle path used for pleasure and commuting from Richland and Kennewick to Hanford,” said John Ittner, Tri-Cities Bicycle Club Member.

Keeping traffic moving through the area of construction was an obstacle WSDOT and the contractor had to overcome. Closing this busy route for construction meant huge disruptions in the flow of traffic between the cities. “We had to close this section of highway a few times,” said Project Engineer Moe Davari. “Each time the contractor got the work done quickly and safely and got the lanes open again ahead of schedule.” This project provides three lanes in each direction on SR 240, from I-182 to Columbia Center Boulevard. A new auxiliary lane will be open in both directions from I-182, across the new Yakima River Bridges, to the Richland Wye Interchange. Improvements at the George Washington Way and Richland Wye Interchanges include a wider ramp and a new roundabout service.

Washington State Gas Tax History

Year	Tax	Year	Tax
1921	1.0¢	1981	13.5¢
1924	2.0¢	1983	16.0¢
1929	3.0¢	1984	18.0¢
1931	4.0¢	1990	22.0¢
1933	5.0¢	1991	23.0¢
1949	6.5¢	2003	28.0¢
1961	7.5¢	2005	31.0¢
1967	9.7¢	2006	34.0¢
1977	11.0¢	2007	36.0¢
1979	12.0¢	2008	37.5¢



Senator Mary Margaret Haugen and Representative Judy Clibborn, the Senate and House Transportation Chairs listen to Governor Christine Gregoire address current transportation issues at the Legislative Breakfast.

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Currently, WSDOT has delivered 90% of TPA and Nickel projects on-time and 80% on-budget. Three rail projects using TPA and Nickel funds have been completed and delivered 100% on-time and 100% on-budget as of March 31, 2007. One ferry project has been advertised. WSDOT has delivered \$638.7 million of TPA and Nickel projects within 99.6% of legislative budget expectations, which is up from 98.4% in the previous quarter.

This edition includes a new report on I-5 high occupancy vehicle (HOV) lane improvements in Pierce County. This program combines 22 separate projects, in order to increase construction efficiency without increasing the projects' original scope of work. When completed, the projects will add 79 HOV lane miles and other improvements such as wider shoulders and improved ramps on I-5, SR 16, and SR 167. To date five projects are complete, three are under construction, and the remaining are being designed or waiting for funding.

The annual report on Aviation details issues related to deteriorating airport pavement conditions. WSDOT's annual survey of public use airports revealed 23% of airport pavement is in poor condition (this does not include Sea-Tac, Tri-Cities, Spokane and Bellingham airports). WSDOT has

established maintenance education and grant programs to help address this. WSDOT made progress in aircraft registration with 5,865 registered in 2006. While that was an increase from 2005, the agency's goal to increase registrations by five percent was not met, due to the large amount of aircraft being exempt from registering.

The annual Post-Winter Report on Highway Maintenance analyzes WSDOT's efforts during the winter of 2006-2007. The report details WSDOT's initial missteps in preparing for severe cold and ice in lowland maintenance activities, but also details WSDOT's progress for the rest of the season. Snoqualmie pass was closed for fewer hours (75 compared with 134 last winter) and the agency achieved its highest winter roadway condition rating in seven years thanks to improved collaborative efforts between WSDOT, counties and municipalities.

The Trucks, Goods and Freight annual update provides indicators on the growth of freight movement in Washington. Following a dip in 2001, freight growth is rebounding: sea containers, rail cargo, air cargo and truck freight. Rail freight in particular is expected to grow in the future; this year's update reviews the Washington State Rail Capacity & System Needs Study, which will shape rail investment within Washington in the coming years.

GAS TAX REVENUE DISTRIBUTION

Ferries 1.08¢	\$74.9 M
Special Cat C Acct 0.75¢	\$52 M
TIB 3.04¢	\$212.9 M
Cities 2.96¢	\$203.0 M
CRAB 1.03¢	\$71.6 M
Counties: 4.92¢	\$341.1 M
Motor Vehicle Acct 10.21¢	\$707.4M
Nickel Account: 5.0¢	\$346.4 M
Transportation Partnership Account (July 2005) 2.5¢(July 2006) 2.5¢(July 2007) 2.0¢(July 2008) 1.5¢	\$516.9 M

LICENSES, PERMITS & FEES DISTRIBUTION 2007-2009

Freight Mobility Multimodal Account: \$6.0 (0.6%)
State Ferries: \$15.5 (1.6%)
Transportation Partnership Account: \$41.5 M (4.4%)
Transportation 2003 (Nickel) Account: \$28.2 (3.0%)
Multimodal Transportation Account: \$132.3 (14.0%)
Motor Vehicle Account: \$386.1 (40.9%)
Air Pollution Control Account:\$4.3 (0.5%)
Vessel Response Account: \$1.2 (0.1%)
Washington State Patrol: \$329.3 (34.9%)



WSGRTA

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