

Washington State Transportation Commission

Board Meeting: Twisp, 5/14/2019

Attendees:

Members of the Commission

Government:

Roger Millar - State Secretary of Transportation (Ex-officio member of Commission.)

Soo Ing Moody - Mayor of Twisp

Salley Ranzau, Mayor of Winthrop

Josh Thompson, Okanogan County Engineer

State Representative Goehner

Public

Don Linnertz, Twisp Works

Lorah Super, MVCC

Jason Paulsen, Methow Conservancy

Isabelle Spohn, County Watch

Others in audience, unidentified.

Staff

Paul Parker - Deputy commissioner of commission - showing slideshow
Approval of minutes. Executive committee expansion.

Statement: Funding has changed a lot. Smaller portion from federal gov't and more burden upon counties, cities, states. Gas tax. What transport commission does: makes finance recommendations to legislature: 20 - year transportation plans by statute. Every 20 years: resilience of system, impact by fires? floods? climate change? earthquake risk? This is one of the reasons we are here. Also, we are a public forum for transportation. We are now leading a 5- year effort to make determinations about driverless vehicles, rules and opportunities. In addition, we are evaluating whether a road usage charge could be a future way of paying, as a replacement of the gas tax.

“Transportation 101”

County Transportation Issues, challenges and successes

TOWN OF TWISP: BACKGROUND, CHALLENGES, Soo Ing Moody, Mayor

*POPULATION: under 1,000.

*CENTRAL IN THE COUNTY: In every direction, it is about 30 miles to various important spots.

*MAJOR CHANGES: Originally a mill town, closed in 1970's. Headquarters of USFS went away. Resource extraction and mill were important. Today, after 2 decades we are not too

different from other small towns, starting to prosper, mostly in arts and culture. Main focus still on serving Methow valley Community. With combination of recreation and arts, we have a lot more visitors. Along state route there are challenges re economics and safety.

SMALL TOWNS/STATE HIGHWAYS: We share many issues with in Pateros. Mayor Carlene Anders could not be present today. Pateros is along highway 97; the community is divided by the highway. Economics - position of highway not necessarily bad, but challenges include motorists speeding. Easy to drive right through town without stopping. As demographics are changing and the rise of the, arts, there is a need for support regarding traffic flow. Downtown business core wants it. A healthy transportation flow is essential to a health community. Sometimes we need to assist drivers in finding the core of the community, considering demographics and economics.

STATE ROUTES: EFFECTS UPON TOWNS: a safety problem of having highway go through town. People with strollers, bikes, dogs, etc... people speed right through town. Still missing connectivity from north to south ends of town. No sidewalk from the bridge toward the north. That is our next priority. Specs for sidewalk construction are a problem for us - expansion joints 10-15 feet apart. That is a problem because with the snow and ice we have, the state sanding trucks come by and dump a lot of sand on roads. This lodges in joints and acts as a ratchet. The expansion and contraction lifts the panels out of place. It's costly for local communities: concrete expansion, differentials - I won't get into that now. Also, there is a lot of pitting in sidewalks due to salt that is put in, which eats away at sidewalks.

SAFE CROSSINGS OF HIGHWAY 20: This is huge. Speed is the issue. This past year, I saw a video of a person being hit while trying to catch the bus across the street. This identified critical areas that exist on a regular basis. We worked in partnership with Trango and other agencies to get a picture of expected construction. creating avenues for safe crossings with islands in between so that people may stop safely in the middle of the road if they need to while crossing the street.

ROUNDAABOUT & NEEDS ASSESSMENTS FOR RURAL AREAS: We are also working on these things: At Twisp Works intersection: because of the hard left -hand turn for those heading south, we need a roundabout. This is a problem in relation to financing. We have to demonstrate there is enough hazard, ie fatalities. Locals know bout these difficulties, but tourists do not. The tourist traffic isn't good in this way. These are roads not covered by state grants and funds. How does a small community take care of infrastructure? How do we show all needs, stats, criteria, and also fix what needs to be fixed? The roundabout is an identified need, but it does not cost any less in a rural area. Funding mechanisms do not speak to communities like ours.

MORE COMMUTING, WITH LOW HOUSEHOLD INCOME: Twisp did put forth a TBD (Transportation Benefit District?) We are trying; but as you can see, a lot more pressure is being put on local communicates and more and more people commute. With a small number and median house hold income is \$32,000 per year, which is well below the county's median. The county is \$66,000. Our voters approved the TBD. It is as much as we can make it according to RCW's.

DETERMINING SPEED LIMIT COMING INTO TOWN: There is a need for a gateway at the entrance to town, to slow the traffic down early. Issue - our request is in for the DOT to

change the speed limit from 50 mph into town. We want the 50 changed to 35. People are still plowing through. We are told that there is a speed survey that was done. According to regs, it is 85 percentile of the speed drivers want to go. Right now maybe 85% are going 60. We will never get what we need this way. We should have the authority to regulate what the safe speeds are. throughout Washington

COMMENT: ROGER MILLAR, SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION: He will talk with Mayor Ing-Moody about any of these issues. There are tools in our tool box that we should be engaging. Happy to have that conversation. There are other folks here from the Central region who have the same concerns.

ING-MOODY: We are looking for....as a result of our requests - a gateway and roundabout - we need to do it according to specs, which means the cost goes incrementally higher because of high speeds people are going. I am looking for those solutions. Speed reduction is simplest way.

DRIVING SAFETY IN RELATIONS TO WILDFIRE DISASTERS: Year 2014/15: Every year except one since that year, we have been in the pathway of fire. Predictions are for increased risk, based on our natural resources. During 2014, there was only one way in and out . At certain periods of time, there way no way in and out. Shows pictures of fire and evacuations, road closures, including Hwy 153 sliding into the river. Ingress and egress changes on a moment's notice.

Cites the Campfire and Malibu fires: In our state, people could not get in to help suppress fires. We were without power for 10 days, we were left to our own resources. There were Inoperable radio communications. Our local communities have now come together more than ever. We all have a critical role. Neighborhoods have captains who say who needs help.

RURAL BROADBAND: Alerts us to potential traffic problems. Transportation is synonymous with how things flow. This needs to be recognized. It is critical. It is a transportation conversation.

TRANSPORTATION: bridges cannot be overlooked anymore. It is no less important than in urban areas, since lives are at stake. We all could be in a rural area at any time; we need to be innovative and address the seriousness of these issues. We all need sound ingress and egress: first responders, visitors - citizens' lives will be affected in an emergency. We are looking to the state to be sure our street to highway connections are looked after.

To Commission: If you have a chance, please come back.

Salley Ranzau, Mayor of Winthrop

She is sad that the Commission didn't come further upvalley. Asks how many have been over North Cascades Highway (most raise hands.)

Winthrop background: 465 residents. expands to over 5,000 this time of year. NC Highway is our lifeline. We are an economic tourism community. The Western theme is why people stop.

Hwy 20 comes right through town. "Winthrop in motion" survey completed in 2018....look at the chart in front of you.

Because of Hwy 20 being completed: The Hwy hits a 4-way stop at Winthrop. Describes layout of town, with Hwy 20 running right through downtown. Because of this, we are restricted as to what we can do with the downtown area. We are trying to become a walking community. Working on bridge over Hwy 20, with an accessible pathway from The Barn to downtown and to town trailhead from Susie Stevens Trail.....this will be important in the future because we cannot expand. We have problems with big trucks, especially those with trailers, at the 4-way stop. They cannot stay in their lanes. We wish there was some way we could control that and not have bigger rigs go through downtown.

WALKING COMMUNITY: We are trying to develop a trail that goes behind buildings on the river side. "River Walk" - another way to go through town other than boardwalks. It would be ADA compatible also.

* P. 26 of survey "Pedestrian" routes.. p. 29, the major issue is a pinch point: p. 32....34 ft wide. Not a possibility to try to move the highway over so we can safely get bed people down there. We are including a walking bridge at the beginning of the Susie Stevens trail. Susie Stevens trail is not yet completed to the Hwy (20). There is an about 30 feet issue with property owners. We plan construction of the pedestrian crossing during fall or next spring.

QU: A commission member asks about cost estimates.

Ranzau: We do not have that yet. we just want to start the conversation about the pedestrian travel through that area.

Member of Commission: - He has done bike riding. Shoulders are not good, especially for novice bike riders. The trails with be very handy.

Ranzau - Signage directing people through side road behind (not clear.) Once you head west from Winthrop, pretty good shoulders on NC highway. We are including bike trail in the "Winthrop in Motion" plan. Increasing bike racks to encourage people to stop and refresh. Non-motorized is our emphasis at this time.

Roger Millar (State Secretary of Transportation) - DOT 3 years ago : created an Active Transport Division to address bike and walking. There is a statewide transport plan underway, with a survey for people who bike and walk on that plan. It involves setting speed limits - a lot of change underway. Wenatchee office would be the one you should contact. Look at the new stuff being discussed re quality of life. You don't want more traffic, want to emphasize quality of life. Some of our tools are clunky, so it's taking some time. We are fixing some of the speed problems, but it takes time.

Work with state rep and senators. They have incredible amount to say about how we invest our money. Wish we could work directly. Think of ways we can make these things work. Give her advice as to whom to contact at the state level. Develop plans, because money goes to plans. Engage us and business, second home owners. What percent of homes are second homes?

Ranzau - Small percentage in town, but around us it is a huge percentage. Talks about the library districts. There are three. 43,000 from Winthrop. North of Winthrop to Mazama has 200,000. Discrepancy. All of these people think of Winthrop as home, but they only contribute indirectly.

(Unclear if this is in reference to mean annual income or something else.)

Millar - happy to work with you as much as possible. Bring your plan in when you talk with Central region. Ask to meet with them and have some transportation people come with you.

Sue Ing Moody -Highest priority is connectivity between Twisp and Winthrop. will eventually be an issue. a growing need. There are nonprofits working with us. Our HS and Elementary are right between towns, and we need non motorized routes to get to school.

Ranzau - Asks for the info on surveys, etc.

Millar - Go to Twitter account for Wa State DOT. School grants - we have 8-10 times more applications than we have money - but successful ones are those who work together with other plans.

LUNCH

Andy Hover (NOTE: first few minutes of this presentation was missed.)

Overview: Okanogan County 7 people per square mile. 41,742 population. County: It is hard to describe to people that if one of my bridges goes out, I can't even get the Lay's potato chip truck here. Grocery stores move to "just in time" service...a big issue. 2 days is tiny compared to the outages we have in our community. We have had no service for 8 straight days before.

Economic Development and Transportation - Don Linnertz, Executive Director, TwispWorks

Josh Thomson, Engineer, Okanogan County

Roads and Bridges:

County is responsible for 1,335 miles of roads

679 paved road, 656 unpaved.

Bridges and bridge funding - has to be over 20 feet long for bridge running for replacement. A lot of rural roads are not fundable by federal gov't

Fires:

2014 - - 265,000 A burned.

2015-305,000 A burned.

Diamond Ck fire - ?

Crescent Fire - 77,000 A

Slope Instability:

Army Corps has been saying you have the worst slope instability 7 years after the fires. That is still coming in the future.

Stream management/funding

2017: (Shows Picture - Sinlahekin Ck, looking down the road - looks like a river with burns and trees and sand banks. Had been meandering, but couldn't get agreement with WDFW for channelizing the creek.

Next picture - upstream . Part of it went into Blue Lake. sort of mitigated the situation.

2018 - Entire material went into Blue lake , which overflowed. Totally washed out road.

After permitting with WDFW, we replaced the culvert with span over the creek. Funding wasn't possible because of various funding laws. Cost us 137,000, not that bad cost-wise. Usually we budget about 10,000 per year for all culverts. Oddly enough, this culvert is dry this year. A majority is going into Blue Lake, which hasn't filled yet.

Whitestone creek: 30" pipe had always been sufficient, even though a fish bearing stream. Replaced it with a 9-foot span, about \$50,000 for county. Whitestone creek crosses the road 3 times.

(Picture: Loup Loup Canyon Road, 2017 and 2018. Cannot resolve the problems due to funding.

(Picture) Hoffet road. Primitive roads - No standards, so that helps (regarding funding.) 2017: 6ft ft Temporary fix, WDFW. They want a bridge; we promised to I.D. ending in next 5 years.

Salmon creek road - Bridge, added on in 1949. Shows 3 sides showing deterioration and tracking of bridge, open now, with 15T weight limit. 19ft structure: does not qualify for bridge funding. (Must be 20 ft) We were able to borrow against state funding, which takes away from preservation.

Statler Bridge diagrams. 1.3 million \$\$, which took out of fund to preserve other county roads.

Salmon Creek. Once gain the bridge is less than 20 feet, so no funding. They managed to get a project with 30 ft bridge. Cost of a mile and a half overlay.

Toroda Crk - 48" culvert needs replacement. Bonapart creek also. another fish-bearing stream with no permanent solution.

Cost of WDFW roads for stream crossings is the issue.

Rural Arterial Program (RAP)

Andy Hover - Qu: asks Josh to talk about federal money swap.

Josh Thompson - Association of County Engineers.....STP fund swapped state \$\$ with DOT - would making funding more efficient. A lot spent on huge cost of processing federal paperwork. Taking much of the \$\$. If project already has federal funding and some of that

funding can be switched with WDFW, it's more efficient. In one case, where \$\$ are allotted....OR does the federal fund swap; but in WA, we are looking for a way for it to happen.

Head of DOT: \$\$ we have is used to match federal money That is a problem. DOT is in a box.

JT - says WDFW here is great. Love working with them.

Many counties having problems with fire and floods. The fact that floods are 7 years later...there is no funding available then. We are talking about using the county as a case study... . Will talk about given the 2 case studies, were best practices done, etc. Was anything missed? This county got hammered but CA are Utah, Montana, etc - are all going through this. Need to bring this up with feds. This is our version of a hurricane.

Don Linnertz - Executive Director, Twisp works

Economy Overview - Good news - The state economy is booming. bad - not everywhere is growing. Growth is a debatable topic here, but what growth is there we want to be sustainable.

Overview of history, Twisp Works -

*30's USFS which closed in 90's long with 100 USFS jobs.

*2008 - community came together to develop economic development hub. \$1 million loan from donor. 100 new jobs, 38 partners. Renovations near completion. Qill be receiving deed to property on June 29th. We are the resource for economic vitality in the Methow Valley.

Goals of Twisp Works

*Advocacy - jump base. Huge economic driver.

* Broadband. improving, expanding.

*Little star campus for affordable child care.

*Methow Made - 45 members.inside and outside of valley.

Methow Investment Network - Connecting local investors with growing businesses . 4.1 million have been loaded (?) so far.

Methow Valley Overview - Goes over population centers. Housing study 3 years ago. 46% of homes were 2nd homes. Larger percent is in Mazama area and that's where income level is highest. We moved from resource extraction economy to diverse, healthy economy.

Workforce: 4800 full-time . 2600 in work force, 62-63% average . 13% work re motel from home. 42% work in seasonal recreation economy. 66% private wage and salary workers. 17% work for gov't at all levels. 15% work for ___???

TOP CHALLENGES.

- *Disparity: Twisp median income is \$32,000, Mazama - \$80,000 range.
- *Access - natural disasters, seasonal road closures. NC Highway not open in winter.
- *Aging Infrastructure.
- *Communication among Multiple agencies.

Highest priorities

- *Public safety
- *Advocacy for effective forest health programs.
- *Infrastructure spending.
- *Coordinating communication.

Questions from Commission with answers

Qu: How much traffic comes over NC highway as opposed to when closed? (Don isn't sure.)

Qu: When I visited in Twisp. There was a kitchen incubator. (??) Don: Not still operating. There is one kitchen that is rented in Twisp Works.

QU - All the empty apple packing sheds had lots of space. (Don doesn't know about that.)

Qu: 2nd homes? Relationship between housing stock and transportation issues?

Don - Mazama most affluent. Most common issue is it is hard to find people to work. People say that they can't find places to live. Mentions Methow Housing Project - in \$40,000 year range. Still, many people travel from Omak, etc. to work.

Millar (Head of WDOT) - Asks about the "downvalley" syndrome of people traveling from 100 miles away for a service job, such as it was in Aspen. TranGo ?

Don - It doesn't start early enough in the mornings for many working people. It is mostly people who do not work that use it.

Van Pool? (Note taker did not hear answer.)

Soo Ing-Moody: Andrew Denham (Director of Public Works in Twisp) has to travel over the Loop to get here for work. Says Andrew would have to travel all the way around (down valley, through Brewster to Okanogan/Omak) to get here if the Loop were closed. Service workers are not finding a place to work. Methow Housing trust was successful because the working people couldn't get into other homes.

Okanogan RTPO - Soo Ing Moody

Priority: To fulfill RTPO requirements for county.

OCOG. Used to be part of 3 county RTPO along with Chelan and Douglas Counties. Now OCOG in 2013, some bumps. Chelan/Doug counties met 100,000 population, which means

we are on our own. Took awhile to get our bearings. We were taken off course during the fires. Growing pains, but success stories.

Voting membership - every jurisdiction in county except Nespelem/Colville tribes. Both are pending. always meet in Okanogan. First time the county governments have come together to work on transportation. Since the fires, we have also branched out to communication and public welfare.

2040 Regional Transportation Plan - They received awards for this plan.

What stood out: the approach. collaborative effort. Paying close attention to the 3 districts - North District , Okanogan/Omak, Methow - each was incorporated meaningfully. Local flavor. success: helped to bring together the communities.

We were able to agree on regional priorities, based upon what we can do with what little we have:

Roads and highways, - taking care of most vulnerable in our communities.

Wildfires, - have strengthened communities.

Economic growth

Supporting walk and biking

Needs on highways

Looking out for most vulnerable in our communities

Present time:

Changes in funding for RTPO - Based on population density.

Increased funding pot - see below.

Conversations about how to change the funding formula across the state.

Okanogan County went from over 82,000 to 77,000, even though state funding has increased.

We are a small voice, but it does not cost us any less in funding. When we have less money to do what we need to do and want to do, this is of great concern. In my opinion, this exacerbates the growing disparity between the urban and rural counties. Okanogan county particularly is rural. a lot of transportation language does not go into details as to what "rural" means. I've heard a lot over last several years - I can say that one of thing that happened was an ongoing idea that the local entities need to put more in. In forming our selves as the OCOG, we came up with ...we are unable to pay fees and dues to be part of it.... We lack the tax base to do it. In areas with larger population densities, there is a choice as to what to put in. In these communities, we have no choice. Connectivity - we are not only the largest geographic county in WA, but we have thousands of miles that are critical for connectivity for Canada, other areas of Washington, in every direction - we are a gateway for tourism and overall mobility.

2 primary items - Our first projects:

Primitive Roads study - This is the first of its kind in the state. In Idaho they were doing research and were not able to find any. It will create a comprehensive profile of unpaved roads in the county. This is very significant. We are creating an inventory, regardless of ownership or

jurisdiction, in an effort to encourage collaboration to deal with the cost in an effective and transparent manner.

Main street project - Communities that have state routes going through town. Relates safety, land use planning, public transit use.

RTPO - Very important. The mindset is to be one of innovation, not just locally. We will leverage our assets. I know that Okanogan county can be viewed as one that does things differently. We see viable solutions to complex problems, minimizing any wastefulness. This is born of necessity but seeking efficiency, minimizing bureaucracy and(?)

It's because of rural character. We want to change the conversation a bit.

Josh Thompson, County Engineer: Emergency response/ primitive roads.

Map of Ok county:

There are 2 primary river valleys. Roads go up a valley and then stop. other roads keep going from the end. Emergency response - obviously we know about fires and floods, landslides. Earthquakes - ? Wind storms are frequent and roads can be blocked. & impassable EMS response may go far into the wilderness. Residents who are 1 mile off county roads may have driveways that haven't been plowed because of a snow storm. Cattle drives can block traffic. Road projects - we had to shift our schedule once around a cattle drive. 49'er's - highway was closed for 1 1/2 hours.

Types of Roads

585 miles are primitive.

City streets -do not know how many roads

USFS - do not know numbers, many are impassable.

WDNR

WDFW

SE corner of County - Colville Tribe and BIA.

"Little C county roads" - "big C" (in black.) Little C - RCW 36.75.080. (If used by public by 10 years it is a public road. Legally cannot be blocked, but it is not a county road.)

Primitive Road Study:- looks at different types of roads. County knows where their roads are, very accurately. He can look up in GIS.

USFS has something similar: Class 1-4 roads. goes on maintenance, etc. He doesn't know that system.

DNR has their info.

BIA is creating a GIS data base, which no one else has. We want to put all this together so we can see where roads connect, to start putting these together to see the (?), the jurisdiction, whom to communicate with in emergency, seasonal closures. etc. Each jurisdiction will update

their systems all the time, so we can't update every time a small road is updated; but if we can know the important roads for a link - if something changes, the agencies need to let each other know. Most of you have an office full of plans and different studies which are outdated as soon as something changes. We need to find a way so it is a living document that is useful.

Qu: You entered the federal agencies - are you meeting regularly with the people?

Josh: No but it needs to happen. Need a protocol.

Soo - Part of the work of the (?contractor?) they hire.

Qu: - If it becomes a county road, can't be moved again?? (check this.)

Josh - Usually has to go to court if closed. Corrected in court.

Qu - Is it possible to connect dots with Google apps.???

Josh - This is dangerous . When Hwy 20 failed a couple of years ago, people were routed to an impassable road.

Qu: State Representative Goehner - If you have an emergency situation and routes are focused onto USFS.....where is the liability?

Josh - No. we haven't talked about that.

Cmdr. Andy Hover - That is the scary part about riding bicycles.....routing them on county road instead of Hwy 20.

Public Comment

Jason Paulsen, Methow Conservancy

I want to mention these things that have been very helpful to our community:

1. Conservancy used the scenic visible program to preserve visibility on Scenic Hwy 20.
2. Local crew - Deed Fink & others, etc. Amazing standards in clearing highway of snow.
3. Jeff Adamson & Andrea list serve for North Cascades highway. Probably the best communication example among agencies. We reached out to them in Wenatchee and they created new HW 20 list serve for any emergency over North Cascades. Getting word out so quickly. If it can be replicated, send resources in that direction.
4. You installed electronic message board out of Winthrop with message that can be changed. It is really helpful when there are events on Hwy 20 corridor or fires.
5. General problem-solving: Staff at DOT - We have engaged WDOT, for example the full-time beacon that was proposed for the airport. We worked with FAA and now have a pilot-based system.
6. Sand shed in Mazama for ski system.

7. Airport planning issue - A rancher 's viability was threatened by expansion of airport. The problem was solved.

Lorah Waters - Methow Valley Citizens' Council, also a director of Okanogan County Conservation District and works with NCW Forest Health Collaborative.

She is "wearing my citizen hat," speaking in favor of primitive roads study. Re all of the little roads that look like they have vanished: They go up valleys. People live up there. They are growing homesteads, 2nd homes, etc. Tourists come and use the roads in emergencies. Some are closed off by gates that are illegally installed. Citizens have to take this to court. We are going on the 3rd year in court on one of those. Questions of liability and construction - the study will shake these out. There is a loss of institutional memory at the state and county levels. You must go back 100 years to prove your case. Not everyone has the time to do such detailed research.

Isabelle Spohn - Works with Okanogan County Watch. Commenting as a citizen. In dealing with affordable housing and related issues, let's not forget that we have many aging citizens and handicapped people in the community. Do not leave them out when addressing the housing and transportation needs of those in the service-related jobs of the tourist industry.

End of Session