

WSDOT/ACEC-WA Executive Liaison Committee Meeting

Tuesday, September 21, 2021 – 2:00 pm to 4:00 pm

Meeting Minutes

- 1.) Steve Roark opened the meeting with group introductions to welcome new members of the Executive Committee.

- 2.) Kevin Dayton and Marshall Elizer discussed WSDOT's COVID Update & Outlook:
 - Evaluating Covid exemptions and accommodations is challenging. WSDOT received approximately 600 exemption requests, about 60 medical and the rest are religious. Most exemptions are approved, but the ability to accommodate the exemption have not been, resulting in a dismissal if the employee chooses to not get vaccinated. WSDOT cannot accommodate the exemptions because of the need for workers to be vaccinated at state worksites and there are no positions available to accommodate a future 100% telecommute.
 - All state agencies are working closely together and are mostly consistent with exemptions and accommodations. WSDOT is being consistent statewide in their evaluation of exemptions and accommodations.
 - The State is navigating issues with various unions. The Washington Federation of State Employees (WFSE) has come to a tentative go forward agreement with the State. This agreement allows employees to stay employed beyond the October 18th deadline by using annual leave or LWOP (if their exemption or accommodation is denied and they choose to get vaccinated) if they can't meet the October 18th deadline for full vaccination. Local 17 is still in negotiations with the State for their employees.
 - Non accommodation results in some very hard discussions for managers and employees. WSDOT expects some employees will retire early and that others will seek employment elsewhere. Some employees have signaled their intent, others have not. How many employees will depart and where from is unknown at this point.
 - WSDOT is trying to be proactive and work on contingency plans for openings and vacancies, but they won't know full departures until closer to the end of October, first of November timeline. WSDOT is sending letters out about needing employee vaccination validation. Employees who have not validated they received their vaccination will receive pre-separation notices as early as Monday, September 27th. Those will be followed by final formal separation notices on Friday, October 1st.
 - There will need to be an evaluation of both capital and operational side of agencies. They are expecting a 5% to 10% reduction in staff and depending

on the level of position and where the vacancies occur will result in different impacts. Entry level positions are easier to replace, but it's harder to build an experienced asset and fill the upper-level positions. The impact of filling upper-level positions causes a cascade of other positions to be vacant and filled, creating other impacts as well. There will be impacts and this will challenge the agency and employees.

- Areas that have been strong in the past may not be quite as strong in the short term. As an example, about half of WSDOT's winter snow and ice program is supported by permanent seasonal employees. These employees have been contacted and about half of them will not be coming back this winter.
- WSDOT will prevail but it's a challenging and emotional time right now.
- There will be gaps going forward, and WSDOT will continue to work with industry to fill gaps via GEC's and contracting but they also believe they need to pursue a dual path and staff up with additional employees as well.

3.) Van Collins and Kevin Dayton provided the following legislative update:

- There will not be a special legislative session in September. There is talk of ongoing conversations but no commitment that something will happen before next legislative session.
- WSDOT submitted their supplemental budget to OFM. It was mostly a housekeeping exercise and not a lot of new and exciting adds.
- The next legislative session is an election year, so new budget discussions become problematic.

4.) The Subcommittee Chairs provided the following updates:

- Design-Build – Art McCluskey:
 - The group had a break for the summer and resumed meeting the 1st week of September.
 - There were a couple of ongoing activities that continued through the summer including:
 - Subgroup review and comments of the current Conflict of Interest Manual.
 - Review of utility language in template documents (general and technical sections). The group working on this includes representation from WSDOT headquarters and regions, and private firms. Proposed changes will be reviewed by the AG's office.
 - At the September meeting, there was an OCOI presentation by Chris Christopher on WSDOT plans and the responsibility of Contractors. Additional OCOI discussion will be pushed out until the October 7th meeting. There is more in the works right now on this topic.

- Additional topics the group will consider: Forward compatibility requirements, level of experience required in fish passage program and whether other experience could be equivalent, common debrief questions, a charter refresh, and identifying topics for next year.
 - Richard noted that there are still questions regarding the OCOI Manual and WSDOT's application. He suggested that this may need to be elevated to the Executive Committee. Chris Christopher and Art suggested the D/B Subcommittee continue their work efforts before the topic is elevated.
- Structures & Geotechnical – Mark Gaines:
 - Discussed membership updates that have already occurred (Craig Boone for Mike Rosa, Scott Sargent for Patrick Glassford, Joan Zhong-Brisbois for Matt Lengyel). Joan spoke about next steps to replace her previous position on the subcommittee (three ACEC applications recruited to replace one position).
 - At their first meeting after summer, the team reviewed their work plan to discuss carry forward items and requested new topics.
 - New topics that were suggested include, but are not limited to, reviewing BDM and Geotechnical Manual to identify and rectify conflicts in the seismic criteria for a buried structure and its adjacent retaining wall; developing updates to RFP 2.13 and BDM Chapter 15; identifying any potential impact on BDM from the recently published AASHTO Guidelines for Performance-Based Seismic Bridge Design.
 - The subcommittee was briefed on Tsunami Design Memo and expected to provide comments. A more in-depth discussion will occur at the November meeting.
 - Discussed the planning for Bridge Office staff augmentation.
 - Subcommittee co-chairs welcome suggestions to recognize Matt's service. Linea and Van are considering one from ACEC.
- Project Delivery – Kevin Miller:
 - Their team has held two meetings since June. Discussion items include improvements for project delivery process.
 - The CVEP CRA process has been used for the last 20 years and lost that new car smell. Observations of a few new areas to improve on include:
 - Focus on meeting prep for teams. Have the right meeting for the right reasons,
 - Assemble strong team with diverse experience,
 - Use a good facilitator to manage the process and the people.
 - Project documentation and requirements: less is more, though in some areas, maybe more should be provided.
 - For D/B contracts – we seem to be having conflicts regarding project development process and as-builts. Creates challenges for d/b

partners. We need a uniform approach adopted and applied across the board.

- New focus areas include staffing levels and impacts:
 - Workplace hybrid model - remote vs. in person, possible attrition, and concerns from ACEC regarding responsiveness of owner.
 - Streamline WSDOT processes to manage workload i.e., software submittals - digital reviews such as blue beam or others?
- Business Administration – Ahmer Nizam:
 - They have 11 team members. They have been on a summer break and their first meeting will be in mid-October.
 - Audit Office and the Office of Equal Opportunity have been conducting listening session on impacts of PPP program and forgiveness.
 - The fish passage team has an updated plan for 2027 posted on the website.
 - Other items include remote business work, hybrid meetings, consultant interviews, coordination regarding the vaccine proclamation and impacts, and overall how things are going and what can be improved.
 - They invite specific expertise to attend meetings depending on topics and generally have OEO and Local Programs provide updates as well.

5.) Jay Drye was welcomed as the new Local Programs Engineer. He has been in his new role 2 months and provided the following Local Programs Update:

- Federal funding for the local bridge program completed selection and award of \$85M in projects throughout state. Information is available on the Local Program website.
- Award letters will be coming out this fall for county safety program, \$35M worth of projects throughout state.
- Busy time of year because of end of federal fiscal year. Challenging time to get funds committed and meet obligation authority.
- One area that is unique and new to Local Programs is the implementation of a Community Workforce Agreement for the West Seattle Bridge project. They worked with FHWA and the City of Seattle to gain approval to move forward on this effort.
- Environmental delivery issues include challenges with ESA consultation. There have been significant delays getting responses from National Marine Fisheries due to stormwater concerns. They have been working with service providers to move forward better. We will likely see more rules regarding stormwater treatment but are starting to see a path to move forward.
- A reminder to all of us to pay attention to the expiration of agreements and end dates. When an agreement expires or work extends beyond the end

- date, it creates a lot of extra work for all involved. Keep an eye on your contract dates.
- Continuous improvement efforts include updates to LAG manual.
 - Chapter 25 R/W process streamlined,
 - Chapter 28 Title 6 updated.
- 6.) Steve provided a brief overview of changes to update the Executive Liaison Committee Charter. It will be sent out to the group for a final review and comments. After that it will be forwarded for each committee member's signature.
- 7.) The group reviewed calendars and the next meeting will be scheduled for January 18, 2022, from 8:00 am to 10:00 am. The meeting was adjourned at 3:30 pm.