

# WSDOT/ACEC-WA Executive Liaison Committee

Friday, October 18, 2024 – 9:30 am to 12:30 pm

Meeting Minutes

In-Person: WSP Tacoma Office, 1201 Pacific AVE Suite 550, Tacoma, WA  
Tahoma Conference Room

## Introductions/review of agenda

Leann George convened the meeting at 9:35 a. m. The meeting began with introductions.

### Present Members:

Mark Gaines	Evan Grimm	Joan Zhong-Brisbois
Kerri Woehler	Jay Drye	Ron Paananen
Jeff Carpente	Van Collins	Rafael Reyes
Todd Trepanier	Jilma Jimenez	Kim Rydholm
Robin Mayhew	Richard Patterson	Leann George
Erik Jonson	Brian Nielsen	Lisbeth Panush

Leann George reviewed the agenda and opened the floor for any additions or comments. There were no suggestions or comments.

## Budget/Staffing Update/Legislative Update

Kerri Woehler

Kerri shared that WSDOT's budget was submitted to the Governor. There are two parts to WSDOT's budget:

- The formal request is extremely modest and does not represent what we need, but what can feasibly accomplish consistent with past budget levels,
  - A two-page paper that outlines in broader terms the needs that the formal request did not address in case new investment monies becomes available. Five areas of need are addressed:
    - Operations and Maintenance
    - Safety
    - Preservation
    - Fish Passages
    - Ferries
- Kerri shared that Marshall Elizer will be shifting into part-time and moving into the National arena.

Todd Trepanier

- Todd stressed that the formal budget submitted to the Governor was narrowed down to absolute needs and strategically created. Most wants are not addressed,

and many more things are needed, and to finish projects we will need more money that is not included in this budget request.

- While WSDOT has pushed to hire new staff recently, we will now scale back and the design portion of projects will need to slow.
- Todd expressed concern that if we are not able to fund fish passage projects, much of the “delivery machine” we have built will be dismantled.
- What will the Federal government do if we can’t comply with the Federal mandate and finish 90% of Fish Passages by 2030? Mark Gaines commented, if we are making progress and have a plan (and funding) to complete the program, we should be fine. However, if the Legislature doesn’t fund fish passages this session, there could be issues.
- Todd and Richard stated that WSDOT is taking a fresh look at the size and complexity of design/build projects that we pursue. Market conditions have changed, and the contracting community seems less interested in taking on complicated and high-risk multi-year design/build projects. Design/build will continue to be an important delivery method for WSDOT, but the projects may be smaller and less risky going forward..

Van Collins

- Van stated that after the last downturn, WSDOT and ACEC came up with a more sustainable plan for the department and determined that private industry could pick up slack when we became too busy. However, private industry may be affected if there is another downturn.
- Van pointed out that many contractors feel engineer estimates should be accurate, instead of guidelines to set reasonable budgets for projects.

### **Review/update ACEC/WSDOT Team Charter**

Leann George led the committee's annual review of the WSDOT/ACEC-WA Executive Liaison Committee Charter.

The committee agreed to the amendments below. Leann will share the updated 2024-2025 WSDOT/ACEC-WA Executive Liaison Committee Charter with the committee.

- Update WSDOT’s Strategic Plan in the Charter to the current Strategic Plan.
- Update the timeline the Meeting Minutes are due, from 7 business-days after the meeting to 30 business-days after the meeting.
- Update Title and headers.

It was noted that the committee members are WSDOT heavy. ACEC will work to recruit new members to ensure the committee is well balanced.

Mark Gaines reminded the committee members that it was agreed that signatures are not needed for the Charter.

Once the amendments are finalized, Leann George will share the updated 2024-2025 WSDOT/ACEC-WA Executive Liaison Committee Charter with the committee members.

### **Discuss Agenda Building for Future Meetings**

Mark Gaines and Van Collins shared that they met and agreed that ACEC will take turns with WSDOT in creating the agendas with the hope of getting more ACEC topics incorporated into our meetings.

Van Collins and Jeff Carpentar will create the agenda for the next scheduled meeting, and Leann George will continue to conduct the meetings and provide admin support for these meetings.

### **Brief Subcommittee Updates**

Business Administration – Erik Jonson

- Erik reported that there are 13 members on the committee, including seven WSDOT staff members and six private consultants.
- Three topics recently covered were:
  - State Contract Goals
  - Teaching about Agreements to contractors and new WSDOT staff
  - Consultant Rates

Design/Build – Richard Patterson

- Richard reported that the technical requirements review has kept them busy and that there are concerns about the survey results.
- Project sizes are too large and fewer contractors are winning bids.
- Richard mentioned that 15-20 people who are not committee members attend their meetings.
- Van asked if they find it hard to get work done when there are so many non-members attending every meeting. He suggested having meetings with only members or limiting the number of participants in meetings to allow them to be more effective.
- DB Summit is currently being planned and is scheduled for December 18, 2024.

Project Delivery – Rafael Reyes

- Rafael reported that their committee is working on the Plan for Approval process and would like to make a consistent process statewide and then add it to the Design Manual by spring 2025.
- He explained that the hardest part in creating a consistent process is that five regions are involved, as well as ACEC members, and everyone has their own needs.
- Rafael expressed that they are looking for additional subjects to tackle as a committee. Mark Gaines suggested that the Project Delivery Committee could take on 3D modeling and paperless processes.

- Evan asked if ACEC could investigate the process of digital delivery and help WSDOT transition into these technologies.

#### **Structures & Geotechnical - Evan Grimm and Joan Zhong-Brisbois**

- Evan explained that many of their members have been serving on the committee past their term. They are currently working to correct this issue. He would like to see a good mix of diverse members.
- Joan echoed Evan and stated that they need to replace team members with new skill sets like Design/Build, and Design/Fish Passage.
- They are planning to modify the meetings to include more ACEC members and make changes to bring new ideas to the committee.

#### **Local Programs Update- Jay Drye**

Jay reported that Local Programs are still on an upward projection, with Federal funds increasing on a yearly basis:

- \$540 million in 2023,
- \$630 million in 2024,
- Expectations for 2025 will continue to increase,
- And be over a billion by 2026 for state and federal funding for locals.

#### **Fish Passage Delivery Update – Kim Rydholm**

Kim shared some statistics and information related to fish passage delivery:

- 146 barriers have been corrected so far restoring access to 50% blocked habitat
- There are 380 additional barriers to correct in our current delivery plan.
- 155 barriers are currently under contract with 70% habitat restored when these are completed
- 45 additional barriers are funded which will get us to 75% habitat restored
- An additional 180 unfunded barriers we will get to 90%
- \$3.5 billion is needed to complete the 90% mandated, \$500 million to correct the 75 newly identified barriers, and \$1 billion is needed for structurally failing culverts (2 very expensive sites will expend about half of this).
- Only \$150,000,000 was received in the 2024 legislative session, resulting in the need to make some difficult decisions resulting in delaying contract advertisements, reducing the size of existing DB procurements and scaling back design efforts.
- We have made program decisions thinking ahead and planning for what positions us best to pivot to additional funding.
- Depending on the funding provided in the 2025 Leg Session, additional design work may have to shut down.

### **WSDOT/ACEC Annual Meeting Survey – Van/All**

The Survey reflected positive results and a request to add the following subjects to the annual meeting:

- Interstate Bridge Improvements
- More Face Time
- Speed Networking

Results will be reviewed again before the planning for 2025 EWSDOT/ACEC Annual Meeting begins.

### **Update on ACEC/Small Business – Mark Gaines**

There is not much to report, and this topic will be tabled for discussion when there is more to report.

### **OCOI Update – Mark/ Jeff/ Van**

Mark Gaines shared the DRAFT updated document for the committee to review and discuss.

- Preliminary Hydraulic Design (PHD) work blocked consulting firms from participating on design-build teams. While some potential conflict of interest exists, WSDOT decided to allow consultants who authored or reviewed PHD's to join design/build teams.
- WSDOT will monitor how things go with this revised approach. This decision could be reversed in the future if necessary.
- In light of this new approach, Jilma suggested that a process should be established where PHD authors provide a briefing to design-build teams. She noted that it's important not to just have the plans, but the "why" of the plans to understand limitations.
- Brian noted that the consultants wouldn't appreciate being questioned on these things, especially by competitors.
- It was agreed that general information might be available that wouldn't cause issues.
- More discussion is warranted on this topic. Mark will do some work on this and will plan on some time for more discussion at a future meeting.

### **Upcoming Meetings and Action Items – Mark/Jeff**

Mark asked for the committee's input on the best time to schedule the first three meetings of the year. The committee agreed that Late-January, Mid-March, and Mid-May would work. Leann will send a Doodle Poll to get input on the best dates/times to schedule the meetings.

There was a brief discussion about the WSDOT/ACEC Annual Meeting and Leann will send out a Doodle Poll to get input on the best dates to provide ACEC for June.

**Action Items**

- OCOI Document: Mark will do some work on this and will plan on some time for more discussion at a future meeting
- Leann will update the Charter and share with the Committee for awareness.
- Leann will send two Doodle Poll's out, one for January/March/ May and another for the June 2025 WSDOT/ACEC Annual Meeting.
- Van will look into how ACEC can support transitioning WSDOT to digital delivery.

**Adjourn**

The meeting adjourned at 11:30 am.