

WSDOT/ACEC Executive Committee Meeting Minutes

Date: September 26, 2025

Time: 9:30 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

Location: WSP Tacoma Office, Tahoma Conference Room

Facilitator: Leann George, WSDOT

Present Attendees

Mark Gaines
Kerri Woehler
Robin Mayhew
Evan Grimm
Jay Drye
Leann George

Lisbeth Panush
Van Collins
Richard Patterson
Ron Paananen
Jennifer Saugen
Molly Cooper

Agenda Overview

Leann George reviewed the agenda, and with no additions or concerns raised, proceeded to present the safety briefing.

Introductions and Opening Comments: Review Membership

The meeting started with introductions and an ice breaker.

Van shared that Jeff Carpenter will be relocating to Tennessee, and Allison Camden will replace him as committee co-chair. He also noted that the ACEC-WA Board is interested in greater engagement in the work of the industry teams. They are considering things like defined term limits for members with a clear process for rotating new people onto the committee. This would allow for fresh ideas, regular turnover, and continued engagement from ACEC members.

It was pointed out that ACEC has two vacancies and Van shared they will be working to fill all vacancies. Van explained that the Board Chair assigns liaison roles with input from the Board, which has helped strengthen relationships. It was agreed that this approach should generate more energy, increase participation, and engagement.

Evan reminded the committee that Joan has moved on and his sub-committee needs a co-chair. He suggested that Greg Hess, from KPFF, has interest and would be a good fit and requested Van's approval to appoint Greg Hess as Co-Chair of the Structures & Geotechnical Committee. Van Collins approved.

WSDOT Leadership Updates - Kerri Woehler

Kerri stated that WSDOT continues to monitor changes at the Federal level and stated that while involvement by the Feds has slowed, there are no consequences to report at this time. WSDOT continues to deliver on a huge program with \$3.6 billion dollars in grants for the 25-26 biennium.

Our workforce has been maintained at acceptable levels, but warnings around emergent issues continue to be seen daily. WSDOT submitted our Supplemental Budget to address some of these issues but continues to face unfunded needs. There are five areas that continue to be critically underfunded:

- Preservation
- Safety
- Fish Passage
- Operations & Maintenance
- Ferries

WSDOT is most concerned at closing the gap for our needs around Preservation, Operations, and Maintenance. Kerri stated that we hope to make a shift away from building new infrastructure and towards preservation the infrastructure that we already own.

Discussion on what ACEC can do to help WSDOT - All

Van started the discussion noting that WSDOT and ACEC should discuss WSDOT's needs. He expressed concern regarding the deterioration of bridges. Kerri stated that Local Programs also have unfunded needs as WSDOT.

Jay Drye shared that preservation needs are also not being met on the local road system. This also applies to other areas, especially Safety. He stated that the Federal Aid for our bridges has been good with more than \$500M being awarded for local bridge projects across the state.

Ron pointed out that County roads currently seem like they are the most dangerous. Jay noted that, despite a huge need for local agency safety improvements, only \$20-30 million dollars has been allocated for this in the current biennium.

Bridge Hits – Evan Grimm/All

Evan Grimm discussed the recent Bridge hits and the challenges this causes for WSDOT in the NWR area. Robin noted they are dealing with three very disruptive over height bridge hits, on SR 167, SR 169 and SR 410.

The Governor has been directly engaged and working with Julie Meredith and WSDOT. The amount of time and energy it takes to address these situations is significant, particularly with NWR and Bridge Office staff. WSDOT is working to reopen these bridges as quickly as possible to restore the mobility that was lost.

The SR169 bridge is 80+ years old and has had notable corrosion and deterioration for years. During a recent inspection, the Bridge Office found that deterioration has reached the state where bridge load restrictions were needed. Currently, one lane is open on this bridge allowing for alternating traffic. Repair work is underway to restore the second lane on the bridge. The repair work is going well with the NWR procuring and fabricating in-house - much of the required structural steel.

The SR410 bridge is closed after an over height hit but is in the process of being repaired. WSDOT hopes to have the bridge open by October 31st for a community event.

The SR167 bridge experienced an over-height hit to some of the prestressed concrete girders around the middle of the bridge. This bridge is currently restricted with only one of the three lanes

open to traffic. Work is underway to open a second lane and plans are being developed to repair the damaged girders and restore all three lanes.

Addressing three significant, overlapping issues has been difficult for WSDOT. Typically, these sorts of issues are handled in-house. We are starting to rethink this model and are looking for ways to bring consulting engineers alongside to support the work. This is a new role for our consultants where they serve on the front lines coordinating with subject matter experts and taking on a project management role. With decades of underfunding preservation, there is likely much more of this work ahead of us. WSDOT will be working on developing a process for handling emergency situations and will be working with our consultants on expanding their role during these emergencies.

Our “time is up”: WSDOT needs to catch up with the maintenance, preservation, and operations of our bridges. Kerri agreed that a proactive, strategic program is needed to fix our failing infrastructure.

Jay mentioned there are many aspects of these damages that take away from regular work by taking the time of our workforce, causing high stress levels, and a depth of resources that are not always available. The lack of funding leads to these failures in infrastructure. Evan noted that sharing the burden in these situations isn’t easy but external help is needed. Van suggested that this would be a great topic for the Annual Meeting.

Strategic Planning / Brainstorming - Mark Gaines

Mark Gaines kicked off the conversation by noting the importance of having a roadmap for where we would like to be in the short and long term, and what we would like to accomplish as a group. This starts with Mission and Vision statements. Do we currently have a Mission Statement? If so, do they need to be updated to reflect the opinions and views of the current committee members.

Mark noted that he would like to put some concerted effort into developing a WSDOT/ACEC strategic plan. We will spend some focused time on this effort during our December meeting. Some “thought provoking” questions will be distributed to the committee ahead of this meeting to give members some time to think about what should be included in our strategic plan.

It was also noted WSDOT’s strategic plan is currently being reviewed by Julie Meredith, and changes to this plan are likely. The ACEC/WSDOT team should pay attention to this as it would be good for our plan to be consistent with or complementary to the WSDOT strategic plan.

Sub-Committee Report Outs

Project Delivery Update - Jennifer Saugen

Jennifer reported that the Project Delivery sub-committee has 18 members (nine from WSDOT, nine from ACEC) and that meeting attendance is usually around 10-12 per meeting.

The sub-committee is looking at common interests and how their plan works. The Design Manual updates were discussed at the last meeting, and they asked ACEC members to present challenges. They are encouraging rotating members for the committee and Jen reported that WSDOT has been

good at this, but some of the ACEC representatives have been on the board for over five years. They are planning to change managers and mentioned that a representative from Local Programs would be beneficial.

Jay responded that it would be good to get involved in areas where they can cross over, but the difficulty would be identifying where Local Programs intersect with the work of this sub-committee.

Business Administration Update - Ron Paananen (Consultant)

Ron reported that things are stable in their sub-committee with 13 members (seven from WSDOT, six from ACEC). He said the committee received good information from Schatzie Harvey regarding the CSO Manual and what is happening in the industry. Fee calculations are a concern of Erik Jonson's, and discussion was held on payments.

Design-Build Update - Richard Patterson

Richards reported that the Design/Build Committee has been discussing Alternative Delivery and settlement monitoring. The difficulty in finding contractors for lump sum design/build projects has been a source of concern. Ron asked if it's the size of the projects that make contractors hesitate and Richard responded that it depends on who they work with.

Structures & Geotechnical Update - Evan Grimm

Evan reported that they are updating their charter and are asking "big picture" questions. Since they are also involved in Hydraulics, they have considered changing their name to Structures, GeoTech, & Hydraulics.

Local Programs Update - Jay Drye

Jay reported that changes within the Federal Government have made it difficult to determine funding. Funding obligations in the last federal fiscal year (FFY24) were \$640M of federal and \$200M of State. This is the last year of the current federal act, he fears this next year will be challenging and that there is no ability to know what funds will be available the following year.

Jay mentioned the continued challenge of invoices coming in for work outside the agreement limits. He stated that there is no way to address this situation when using Federal funding. With 1,500 active projects they experience around one project that is outside their agreement per week.

There is currently a trend of ROW issues they are trying to address to ensure compliance is maintained. They will be reviewing their chapter of the LAG and making minor updates. Once those are finalized, an email with the link and listed changes will be sent out.

WSDOT Fish Passage - Molly Cooper

Molly provided an update on the fish passage program, including the work that has been accomplished and their plan for delivering future projects. A copy of her presentation will be provided to committee members.

Molly shared about a Peer Exchange that will happen in October and brings together WSDOT staff, contractors and consultants who deliver fish passage projects. This is a WSDOT event, but we are getting great logistics help and support from ACEC.

Next Meeting & Action Items

- **Next Meeting:** December 1, 2025, (virtual)

Action Items:

- Leann and Kerri will share link to budget out to ELC Members: Washington State Department of Transportation 2026 supplemental budget request available.
- Leann or Mark will send out a list of questions to consider helping ELC to prepare for Strategic Planning during next meeting.
- Leann will look for information on the team's mission and vision: There is a purpose, mission, vision in the Charter.
- Leann will send a link for Charter Updates.
- Molly Cooper will share a copy of the Fish Passage presentation.
- Van will connect WSDOT Federal Relations (Lorraine B) with ACEC Federal Relations (Matt Rifer)
- Jay Drye will look at opportunities for adding a Local Programs member to participate in Project Delivery Subcommittee
- All, prepare for Strategic Planning discussion on December 1st.

The meeting adjourned at 11:40 am.