

WSDOT/ACEC-WA Executive Liaison Committee

Wednesday, December 1, 2025 – 1:00 pm to 3:00 pm

Virtual: MS Teams

DRAFT Meeting Minutes

Introduction

Present Attendees:

Mark Gaines	Ron Paananen
Kerri Woehler	Jennifer Saugen
Robin Mayhew	Erik Jonson
Evan Grimm	Jilma Jimenez
Jay Drye	Allison Dame Camden
Leann George	Greg Hess
Lisbeth Panush	Brian Nielsen
Van Collins	Steve Roark
Richard Patterson	

Agenda Overview

Leann George reviewed the agenda. Hearing no additions or objections, the agenda was accepted, attendees introduced themselves, and the meeting proceeded.

Leadership Updates

Van Collins Update:

- Van also welcomed Allison Dane Camden to the ACEC leadership team and acknowledged the valuable expertise she brings, including her prior experience working with WSDOT.
- Van Collins outlined ACEC's concerns regarding potential new taxes and the long-term impact on businesses. He emphasized the importance of addressing maintenance and operation's needs, completing capital projects over the coming years, and preparing for upcoming federal regulatory requirements.
- Mark Gaines asked for ACEC's position on road usage fees versus gas taxes. Van stated that ACEC would be supportive of road usage fees, though believes it might be difficult to convince the Legislature and the public of the benefit.
- ACEC is working on a bill to clarify RCW 42.41.15, specifying that liability applies only in cases of an entity's own negligence.
- Van noted two vacancies on the ACEC Board and shared that ACEC plans to fill future Board positions by advancing active subcommittee members, hoping this will encourage greater participation.

Kerri Woehler Update:

- Kerri Woehler noted that this period marks the wait for the Governor's budget, which is released in the third week of December and guides the upcoming legislative session. She reported that the House, Senate, and Transportation Committees are meeting this week to hear presentations.
- WSDOT is requesting a budget to maintain current operations, which will not immediately address costs related to Preservation, Safety, Maintenance and Operations, Fish Passage, or Ferries. These needs are expected to be addressed later through the supplemental budget
- Kerri highlighted recent leadership changes, including Allison Krutsinger as Senior Director of External Relations, and John White, Assistant Secretary of Urban Mobility and Access.
- She mentioned ongoing issues related to DBE, with Jay Drye coordinating efforts with the Office of Equity and Civil Rights. Van mentioned that while recently attending a conference, WSDOT was considered a leader in the topic of DBE.

Subcommittee Updates

Business Administration – Erik Jonson

- Erik Jonson reported that the Business Administrative Subcommittee met in September and early November and developed a priorities list for the year. Current focus areas include onboarding small firms, DBE-related topics, safe harbor, and rate negotiation, in addition to standing agenda items. Attendance has been strong at each meeting.
- Ron Paananen noted that cost-plus-fixed-fee remains a challenging topic; however, the group agreed that additional education would be beneficial. Further discussion on value pricing is anticipated.
- Mark expressed interest in learning more about the cost-plus-fixed-fee process and requested that Erik and Ron prepare a presentation for a future WSDOT/ACEC ELC meeting.

Design/Build – Richard Patterson

- Richard Patterson reported that meetings are primarily held in person but continue to be scheduled as hybrid. Ongoing discussions include lane restrictions, field cost adjustments, closeout processes, and boilerplate/templates for Design-Build. A full program for next year is currently under review.
- Richard is working through comment resolutions related to Design-Build, acknowledging that the process can be complex and challenging. He stated that lump-sum Design-Build is being phased out.

Project Delivery – Jennifer Saugen

- Jennifer Saugen reported that while the group includes 18 participants, approximately half attend meetings regularly. Increasing participation is a priority, and efforts are underway to rotate members from the committee to create opportunities for others to participate.
- The group is handling clear zone documentation, Design Manual updates, and turnback process clarification. No major issues were reported at this time, with items being addressed as they arise.
- Mark suggested inviting Jim Mahugh to present on the digital delivery efforts he is working on.

Structures & Geotechnical - Evan Grimm and Greg Hess

- Evan Grimm reported that the Structures & Geotechnical Subcommittee has met twice since the summer. Discussions have included real-time monitoring systems, best practices, and the potential to offer design-related services.
- Greg Hess shared that he consulted with Darren Nebergall to gather input on the proposed technical review service. Concerns were raised regarding potential liability if design feedback is later contradicted. Evan noted that a disclaimer could help address this issue and characterized the overall risk as low.
- Mark expressed appreciation for the discussion and reminded the group that this review service has been available for eight years but has not been utilized. He suggested that including a disclaimer clarifying the opinion-based nature of the service may help reduce liability concerns. The service could provide non-binding recommendations and committee opinions, with responsibility remaining with the user to verify and validate the recommendations.
- Jilma Jimenez offered her perspective that firms may opt not to use the service due to concerns about potential liability.

Local Programs - Jay Drye

- Jay Drye stated that federal programs are generating additional workload as this marks the final year of the current federal authorization. The call for projects has decreased due to uncertainty about future funding and stated that remaining resources are insufficient to fund all identified needs. Jay described the current environment as both interesting and risky and expressed hope for greater stability moving forward.
- He also reported that the City Safety Award call is open and under review, and that County Safety Awards have been issued. All safety programs continue to see strong interest.
- DBE updates were briefly discussed.

Strategic Planning – Mark/Allison/All

Mark shared that materials were distributed in advance and emphasized the expectation that all committee members would come prepared to actively participate in the discussion. He explained that the committee's initial focus will be on refreshing the Mission, Vision, Values, and Goals before moving forward with updates to the Strategic Plan. Mark noted that the committee already does strong work, and that a refreshed Mission, Vision, Values, and Goals statement prepared with a meaningful Strategic Plan will help focus efforts on meeting industry needs with positive, measurable outcomes.

Mark acknowledged that this effort would span multiple meetings and expressed appreciation for the committee's continued participation and thoughtful input.

Allison noted that this approach will help maximize the group's time together and increase the overall value of future meetings.

Van shared that the committee was originally established to address challenges and strengthen working relationships. Given ongoing technical issues, he stated that this process will support envisioning the future and proactively identifying potential challenges. The committee agreed that this is an appropriate time to reevaluate and improve existing processes.

The committee discussed ideas and feedback, which are captured [Draft Mission-Vision-Values_Notes \(003\).docx](#)

Mark requested that committee members submit proposed revisions to the Mission and Vision statements prior to the next meeting so they may be finalized.

Upcoming Meetings

- January 26, 2026, from 2-3:50 pm / Virtual Only Meeting
- March 17, 2026, from 1-2:50 pm / Virtual Only Meeting
- May 19, 2026, from 2-3:60 pm / Virtual Only Meeting
- June 16, 2026, from 8 am- 3 pm / In-Person Annual Meeting (Hotel Murano)

Action Items:

- Leann/Mark will create a Teams Channel for the group.
- Erik/Ron will prepare a presentation for the WSDOT/ACEC ELC Meeting.
- Mark, Alison, and Van will review the Mission and Vision statements and bring them back to the group for consideration.
- All Committee Members submit suggested changes for the Mission and Vision statements before the next meeting scheduled for January 26, 2026.