AGC/WSDOT Structures Team Meeting Minutes - January 2026

1. Meeting Summary

Meeting Title	AGC/WSDOT Structures
Date	January 22, 2026
Start Time	8:54 AM
End Time	9:30 AM
Duration	36 minutes
Total Participants	14

2. Participants

Name	Email
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3. Agenda Items

- Safety Topic – Highway Worker Safety Awareness
- Foreign Drone Use on Federally Funded Projects
- Buried Structure Bedding Material – Standard Spec 6-20.3(6)A
- Elastomeric Bridge Bearings – Adhesive Requirements
- NCHRP 350 Barrier Sunsetting / MASH Transition
- Shotcrete Specification Updates (Informational)

4. Agenda Item Discussions and Action Items

Safety Topic – Highway Worker Safety Awareness

Jim Cuthbertson noted there was no prepared safety topic and opened the floor. Bryant Helvey referenced a recent AGC/WSDOT meeting and discussed the WSDOT Worker Memorial Fund, emphasizing that both WSDOT staff and contractors face hazards working around highways. He

reminded attendees that even those not regularly exposed to field risks can improve safety by slowing down, avoiding phone use, and driving cautiously through work zones. Jim Cuthbertson proposed expanding the Worker Memorial Fund into a broader “Highway Worker Memorial Fund” that would include contractor personnel. Ryan Olson voiced support, stating it was a “great idea.”

Action Item(s): Jim Cuthbertson to raise the concept of expanding the Worker Memorial Fund with WSDOT leadership.

Foreign Drone Use on Federally Funded Projects

Jim Cuthbertson introduced federal requirements restricting the procurement and operation of foreign-made drones on federally funded projects, noting that the issue extends beyond purchasing drones to their operation on projects. He acknowledged concerns regarding the significant cost difference between domestic and foreign-manufactured drones. Archie Kollmorgen stated that his firm actively uses drones for cut-and-fill calculations and model integration, and expressed concern about the practicality of the restriction, noting that public drone use is not restricted. Chris Brueske and Ryan Olson questioned enforcement mechanisms and certification requirements. Jim clarified that the mandate is federal law and likely unavoidable, potentially applying to both existing and future projects. Lance Rasband asked about implementation timing, and Jim indicated it could occur within months and apply to ongoing projects. Change order implications were discussed, with Jim stating WSDOT’s likely position would be that contractors bear costs due to change-in-law provisions.

Action Item(s): Contractors to submit written comments on the draft General Special Provision language to Jim Cuthbertson.

Buried Structure Bedding Material – Spec 6-20.3(6)A

Jim Cuthbertson proposed deleting the requirement for filter fabric over bedding material beneath precast buried structures. He explained the requirement references Section 9-08.6, which lacks acceptance criteria and QPL listings, and introduces ambiguity and potential delays. Matthew Scarsella noted the fabric appeared to be overkill. Discussion confirmed that WSDOT already controls bedding and leveling materials, reducing the risk of voids. General agreement was expressed that the requirement provides little benefit and could be deleted.

Action Item(s): WSDOT to proceed with deleting the filter fabric requirement from the specification.

Elastomeric Bridge Bearings – Adhesive Requirements

Jim Cuthbertson described a recent project where a bearing supplier declined to recommend an adhesive, prompting consideration of reinstating a default rubber cement requirement. He expressed concern that specifying rubber cement without material criteria could introduce ambiguity. Archie Kollmorgen and Ryan Olson stated that suppliers typically include adhesive recommendations with bearing pads. Bryant Helvey suggested identifying whether the issue

stemmed from a single supplier rather than a systemic problem. Consensus emerged that revising the specification without further investigation could be premature.

Action Item(s): Jim Cuthbertson to investigate the bearing supplier issue further before pursuing any specification change.

NCHRP 350 Barrier Sunsetting / MASH Transition

Jim Cuthbertson reviewed WSDOT's phased plan to sunset NCHRP 350 temporary barrier and transition to MASH-compliant systems by December 31, 2030. He explained the stepped approach is intended to balance safety goals with supplier inventory realities. Matthew Scarsella noted that requiring larger quantities too quickly could significantly increase costs. Chris Brueske referenced a Project Delivery Memo discussing reuse of existing barrier on preservation projects. Jim indicated WSDOT would issue a formal notice and post details publicly.

Action Item(s): WSDOT to publish formal notice outlining the stepped MASH implementation plan.

Shotcrete Specification Updates (Informational)

Jim Cuthbertson provided an overview of ongoing efforts to revise shotcrete specifications, including studies on structural performance, longevity, and aesthetics. He referenced national data collection efforts and experimental panels constructed for evaluation. Contractors expressed support for expanded shotcrete use, particularly for fish passage projects. Bryant Helvey stated contractors are supportive and willing to bring technical experts to future meetings. Jim noted challenges in relaxing testing and submittal requirements and welcomed contractor feedback.

Action Item(s): Jim Cuthbertson to distribute draft shotcrete specification language prior to the next meeting.

Details for Agenda Items

Foreign Drone Use on Federally Funded Projects

1-07.1(6) Unmanned Aircraft Systems

The procurement and/or use of any drone (UAS) to complete any primary or supporting tasks within the scope of this Contract will comply with the following directives.

- *National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) – American Security Drone Act of 2023 (ASDA, Pub. L. No. 118-31).*
- *Office of Management and Budget Memorandum M-26-02 – Restrictions on using federal funds to purchase or operate prohibited foreign UAS.*
- *Federal Acquisition Regulation Clause 52.240-1 – Prohibition on Unmanned Aircraft Systems Manufactured or Assembled by American Security Drone Act-Covered Foreign Entities.*

Contractors, subcontractors, and lower tier subcontractors may not procure or operate prohibited UAS/drones manufactured or assembled by "covered foreign entities" as defined in the Federal Acquisition Security Council (FASC) in the performance of this Contract.

Buried Structure Bedding Material

Standard Specification 6-20.3(6)A **Bedding and Leveling** has the following requirement that I want to delete about filter fabric.

…The Buried Structure bedding and leveling material shall be compacted in accordance with the Section 3-07.3(1)E requirements for backfill supporting Structures. ~~If the bedding material has voids after compaction, then a Filter Fabric, conforming to Section 9-08.6, shall be placed over the bedding to separate the leveling course from the bedding material.~~ Leveling material shall not be placed under precast reinforced concrete retaining walls.

Elastomeric Bearings

6-02.3(19) Bridge Bearings

Bridge bearings include the following:

1. Elastomeric bearing pads conforming to Section 9-31.8(1).
   The Contractor shall adhere the elastomeric bearing pads to the concrete surface using the manufacturer's recommended adhesive product. If the manufacture does not recommend an adhesive, rubber cement shall be used.

Barrier Sunsetting

WSDOT has enacted a stepped implementation plan to gradually increase the number of projects requiring MASH compliant temporary barrier each year until the 12/31/2030 NCHRP 350 Temporary Barrier Sunset Date is reached. This will help ensure there are adequate stocks of MASH compliant temporary barrier available beginning 1/1/2031. The MASH compliant temporary barrier stepped implementation plan is as follows:

- Current – contracts with less than 1,000 LF of temporary barrier will only allow the use of MASH compliant temporary barrier
- Contracts advertised on or after September 2026 with less than 2,000 LF of temporary barrier will only allow the use of MASH compliant temporary barrier
- Contracts advertised on or after September 2027 with less than 3,000 LF of temporary barrier will only allow the use of MASH compliant temporary barrier
- Contracts advertised on or after September 2028 with less than 4,000 LF of temporary barrier will only allow the use of MASH compliant temporary barrier

- Contracts advertised on or after September 2029 with less than 5,000 LF of temporary barrier will only allow the use of MASH compliant temporary barrier
- December 31, 2030 (NCHRP 350 Temporary Barrier Sunset Date) – all contracts advertised after this date will only allow the use of MASH compliant temporary barrier

Minutes by: Chat GPT from MS Teams Transcript
Reviewed by: Jim Cuthbertson for accuracy, content and clarity

AGC/WSDOT Structures Team

Meeting Minutes

April 16, 2026

Meeting Details

Meeting Title	AGC/WSDOT Structures
Date	April 16, 2026
Start Time	8:55 AM
End Time	10:26 AM
Duration	1h 30m

Participants

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1. Executive Summary

On April 16, 2026, representatives from the Associated General Contractors (AGC) and the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) convened for a technical briefing and constructability review of critical infrastructure projects. The primary focus involved two major regional projects: the Cat Whisker Creek Bridge fish passage project in Kenmore and the SR3 Freight Corridor (Belfair Bypass).

The meeting facilitated a deep technical exchange regarding wall construction constraints, subsurface challenges, and federal regulatory requirements. Significant administrative updates were also finalized, including the upcoming leadership transition within the WSDOT Structures co-chair position and the formalization of a Shotcrete Task Force aimed at modernizing technical specifications and aesthetic standards for the department.

2. Project Briefing: Cat Whisker Creek Bridge

2.1 Project Scope and Timeline

Located on SR522 in Kenmore, this project involves the removal of a 6'x3' concrete box culvert that currently acts as a fish passage barrier. It will be replaced with a buried structure designed for a 24-foot wide stream channel—a significant expansion over existing conditions to meet tribal and WDFW requirements.

- **Advertisement:** Spring 2027
- **Construction Start:** Fall 2027
- **Completion:** Fall 2029 (Tentative)

2.2 Three-Phase Construction Plan

To accommodate the high traffic volumes on SR522, WSDOT is committed to maintaining two open lanes at all times via a three-phase execution strategy:

- **Phase 1:** Construction of westbound lanes and shoulder, supported by two new walls.
- **Phase 2:** Utilization of middle lanes to maintain bi-directional traffic flow.
- **Phase 3:** Construction of the southern bridge section and the replacement of the existing retaining wall (Wall 5).

2.3 Wall 5 Replacement: Scour and Technical Constraints

The replacement of "Wall 5," an existing soldier pile/tie-back wall, is a central technical challenge. While salvaging the existing 2015 wall was discussed, it was determined that portions of the wall must be replaced due to current scour requirements. The new design requires a deeper embedment to handle increased retained height and modern seismic surcharge loads, which the original piles are not rated to withstand.

A critical coordination point involves the "angle point" where the new structure transitions back to the existing grade. The design team must ensure a seamless interface as the replacement length continues to be refined.

2.4 Constructability and Anchor Management

The team analyzed two primary construction methods for the new wall:

- **Reach-Over Drilling:** Preferred for economic efficiency, though industry partners noted a 15-foot maximum reach limit for drill rigs before losing the rigidity required for precise placement.
- **Bench Construction:** Building a 20-foot wide bench at the bottom of the slope to support drill rigs. While this provides stability, the steep contours and limited access make this logistically strenuous.
- **Existing Tie-backs:** Due to the difficulty of detensioning anchors encased in fascia concrete with no remnant strand to grab, industry experts suggested "burning PT strands" one at a time with a torch. However, the consensus is to abandon anchors in place and cut the existing wall 2 feet below the surface. The new design will leverage the "arching action of the soil" to drill between existing anchors where possible.

3. Project Briefing: SR3 Freight Corridor (Belfair Bypass)

3.1 Corridor and Jurisdictional Constraints

This 7.5-mile new alignment is designed to accommodate "blade runners"—113-foot oversized loads. At the North End dual roundabout, the project connects to Lake Flora Rd, which is currently owned by the City of Bremerton.

3.2 Right-of-Way and Subsurface Conditions

The North End is heavily constrained by Suquamish Tribe parcels (BIA trust land). Because land acquisition is not feasible, the roadway prism is restricted to 120 feet, necessitating 17-foot retaining walls.

- **Soil Profile:** Subsurface conditions consist of five feet of adequate topsoil overlying a restrictive "hard pack" and solid clay layer, resulting in zero infiltration capacity.
- **Design Pivot:** To avoid expensive tie-back systems, the team is evaluating shifting the roadway alignment to the right. This shift aims to balance wall heights, potentially bringing the exposed height down to approximately 10 feet to allow for cantilevered soldier pile walls.

3.3 Technical Alternatives for High Walls

For the 17-foot sections where cantilevering is difficult, the team discussed:

- **Combi Walls:** Using a king pile and sheet pile system to increase structural capacity for the 20-foot cantilever limit.
- **Soil Nail Walls:** An alternative, though concerns remain regarding nails encroaching into tribal property boundaries.

3.4 FAA Compliance and Buried Detention

The project's proximity (within 10,000 feet) to the Bremerton airfield triggers FAA bird-strike regulations. These restrict pond depth and shaping to avoid attracting waterfowl.

- **Collaborative Solution:** The team proposed pivoting to buried detention structures (plastic or precast concrete vaults).
- **Strategic Benefits:** This shift eliminates bird-strike risks, removes the need for high-maintenance pond liners, and could potentially eliminate the 20-foot tall retaining walls required for open-air grading.

4. Leadership Transition and Organizational Updates

Jim Cuthbertson will retire effective May 22, 2026. **Chris Brueske** has been appointed as the new co-chair for the structures team, officially assuming the role in September 2026 following the summer recess.

5. Shotcrete Task Force Objectives

WSDOT is forming a mini-task force led by Concrete Specialist **Anthony Mizumori** and **Jon Keeth** to address industry pressure for expanded shotcrete use.

- **Technical Focus:** Evaluation of quality concerns, including voids, shadowing behind reinforcement, density, and permeability.

- **Aesthetic Evolution:** The department is moving away from the "Fractured Fin" finish, which is currently viewed as an outdated "80s-era" aesthetic. The task force will investigate modern, high-quality finishes.
- **Industry Engagement:** WSDOT is seeking volunteers with national experience in structural shotcrete application to assist in a "bottom-up" evaluation of current specifications.

6. Conclusion and Action Items

The meeting reinforced the value of early industry involvement in identifying constructability hurdles and design alternatives.

Next Steps:

- **Hydraulic Feasibility: Foster Johnson** will coordinate with the Hydraulics and Maintenance divisions to evaluate the feasibility of buried detention structures to mitigate FAA bird-strike risks and eliminate tall wall sections on SR3.
- **SR3 Alignment Review:** The design team will model a roadway shift to the right to balance wall heights and assess the viability of Combi walls.
- **Shotcrete Task Force Volunteers:** Industry partners are to provide contact information for specialized national shotcrete applicators to **Chris Brueske** by the end of May.
- **Cat Whisker Design:** Consor and WSDOT will refine the transition plan for Wall 5 at the angle point to ensure structural continuity with the existing grade.

Notes generated by AI
Checked by Cuthbertson.