

## **WSDOT/ACEC-WA Executive Liaison Committee**

Tuesday, March 17, 2026 – 1:00 pm to 3:00 pm

Virtual: MS Teams

DRAFT Meeting Minutes

### **Introduction**

#### **Present Attendees:**

Mark Gaines

Kerri Woehler

Todd Trepanier

Evan Grimm

Leann George

Van Collins

Richard Patterson

Jennifer Saugen

Erik Jonson

Jilma Jimenez

Allison Dame Camden

Brian Nielsen

Steve Roark

### **Agenda Overview**

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

### **WSDOT Updates**

Tood Trepanier

- Todd presented a PowerPoint summarizing the impacts of the December 2025–2026 weather emergencies.
  - He reported approximately 100 road closures and shared photos illustrating the extent of damage.
  - The events required a significant volume of response work by WSDOT.
  - He noted that lighter winter conditions since then have supported ongoing repair efforts; however, the agency is now beginning to see culvert failures as a result of the earlier damage.
- Todd emphasized that 2026 has already been heavily focused on emergency response, with resources shifting from planned program work to emergency work.
  - He highlighted ongoing funding challenges, noting insufficient resources to address current and future needs. A supplemental budget request has been submitted totaling approximately \$3 billion across preservation, ferry operations and maintenance, safety, and fish passage.
  - While \$300 million is anticipated for the 2025–2027 biennium, there remains an estimated \$1.2 billion annual shortfall to adequately address preservation needs.
- He also provided an update on Executive Order 25-07, which will require Project Labor Agreements (PLAs) for all construction projects valued at \$35 million or more. Approximately 10 projects in the current biennium are expected to be evaluated under this requirement.
- Due to the scale and complexity of upcoming work, recruitment is underway for a contract labor specialist and for an Assistant Secretary for Fish Passage Delivery to support the remaining fish passage efforts.

Kerri Woehler

- Kerri emphasized that the increasing number of emergent failures across the system is a central challenge. While Multimodal Development and Delivery continue to focus on policy and strategic priorities, much of the work is being driven by reactive needs, often shifting attention to the next immediate issue. Despite this, efforts are ongoing to advance the safety program, safety policy, and Complete Streets initiatives; however, these competing demands limit opportunities to highlight positive accomplishments.
- It was noted that grant program delivery remains a strong success, with more than \$3 billion delivered for local grant projects. While there are many positive outcomes occurring across the system, the current focus remains heavily centered on addressing emergent work.
- Additionally, there is legislative direction to conduct several studies related to preservation, maintenance, and elements of safety. Approximately half a dozen studies are underway, with efforts focused on understanding and responding to associated provisos.
- Van suggested that a coordinated discussion would be beneficial to ensure a shared understanding of current conditions and to identify how American Council of Engineering Companies (ACEC) can support in effectively conveying these messages to legislators.

### **Legislative updates**

Van Collins

- From the business community perspective, there is general support for bonding, alongside an awareness of the implications as the state approaches a new long legislative session and the potential impacts moving forward. The budget discussions reflected a complex and evolving dynamic.
- From the American Council of Engineering Companies (ACEC) perspective, taxation was identified as a significant issue. The proposed imposition of a “millionaire’s tax” is expected to have notable impacts on member firms, particularly related to profitability. Conversely, there was a positive development in the rollback of surcharges on larger firms, bringing their tax structure back into alignment.
- It was also noted that the proposed millionaire’s tax is anticipated to face substantial constitutional challenges and is likely to ultimately be decided through a ballot measure.

### **Subcommittee Updates**

Business Administration – Erik Jonson/ Ron Paananen

- Meetings continue to be well attended, with two key topics emerging as areas of focus. The first is the evolving landscape of contract goals related to Disadvantaged Business Enterprises (DBE) and small businesses. The team plans to work closely with the Office of Equity and Civil Rights (OECR) to better understand direction and alignment moving forward.
- The second focus area is the integration of artificial intelligence from a contractual document perspective, including how AI may impact development, review, and management of contract materials.
- Additionally, it was noted that a valued member, Carlyn Simmons, will be retiring soon, and the group plans to recognize and celebrate her contributions.

Project Delivery – Rafael Reyes/ Jennifer Saugen

- The subcommittee continues to have solid attendance and meets every six weeks. Membership transitions are underway, with some members retiring or departing and new members being brought on to maintain continuity.

- The group recently completed a review of Design Manual Chapter 11. While no changes resulted, the discussion was valuable in reinforcing current design policies. An upcoming Design Manual update is anticipated in 2026, which is expected to be a meaningful collaborative effort between WSDOT and ACEC.
- Regarding the turnback process, a process improvement effort is currently underway to ensure properties are effectively returned, and the subcommittee has provided input and feedback to support this work.
- The subcommittee also maintains a standing brainstorming session at each meeting, which has helped identify potential topics for the Annual Meeting.
  - These include updates on fish passage projects, program restructuring efforts, and opportunities within the IBR program.

#### Design/Build – Richard Patterson/ Art McCluskey

- A subcommittee consisting of WSDOT staff from the Northwest Region, Olympic Region, Construction, and Design offices has been convened to evaluate lump sum Design-Build practices and the associated resolution processes. The goal is to reestablish a more collaborative approach that prioritizes project outcomes.
- A structured and safe environment was created to encourage open dialogue and ensure all perspectives were heard. The team is now organizing and evaluating key themes (“buckets”) that emerged from these discussions. Efforts are ongoing to refine the Design-Build process, with a focus on improving collaboration, clarity, and overall project delivery effectiveness.

#### WSDOT/ACEC-WA Structures Geotechnical Hydraulics Sub-Committee – Evan Grimm/ Greg Hess

- The subcommittee met last week, with the primary benefit of these meetings continuing to be information sharing related to project challenges, project delivery, design policy, technology, and advancements in practice.
- It was noted that the Design Review Service will be sunset. The concept was refined and presented to a Local Programs group; however, based on feedback, there appears to be limited interest. As a result, the decision has been made to discontinue this service and explore alternative options.
- The group is also considering changes to membership requirements. Currently, there are seven WSDOT members serving three-year terms, with an option to extend to five years. The proposed change would establish permanent positions for management-level members, recognizing their ongoing role in policy-related discussions. This would increase WSDOT membership to nine members, with four serving in permanent roles, alongside ten ACEC members. The proposal was brought forward for feedback, and no concerns were raised; overall, the approach was supported.
- Evan shared that he has been in his role for approximately three years and plans to rotate out. Additionally, three ACEC members are ready to rotate off. Greg Hess will coordinate with Van Collins to identify and onboard new members.
- It was also noted that consultants are being utilized to support emergency work; however, this topic has not yet been formally discussed within the subcommittee.

### **Strategic Planning – Mark/Allison/All**

Mark shared that no additional comments or input have been received on the working document. The intent is to incorporate this content into the Charter, with the next step focused on developing the group's goals. [WSDOT ACEC-WA-ELC Charter October 2025 Updated March 17th mission-vision-values.docx](#)

It was suggested that goal setting begin in September during the in-person meeting, using the finalized document as a strong foundation for that work.

With no further comments, the document will be adopted as presented.

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

Mark started the discussion, pulling up the June Annual meeting brainstorming document and sharing the ideas that were added before the meeting. After that he opened the floor for further discussion

- Mark expressed a desire to identify a second executive speaker prior to concluding the meeting and invited input from ACEC members.
- Suggested executive speakers included:
  - Kerri Woehler (recommended by Allison and Kerri)
  - Allison Krutsinger (legislative and federal perspective, including hiring efforts)
  - Consideration of including multiple speakers (e.g., Kerri and Allison)
- Additional speaker/topic suggestions:
  - John White (IBR) and Carely Francis
  - Charlene Kay – North Spokane Corridor (Stages 2 & 3 and remaining contract work)
  - Legislative speaker (confirmed by Van)
  - Safety updates, including traffic accidents and progress (Evan)
  - Regional program overview (~\$1.5B) with brief updates from each region, similar to AGC Annual Meeting format (Brian)
  - Project delivery focus, particularly newer Design-Build projects (Richard)
  - HEAL Act updates (group interest)
  - Emergency projects and emerging trends (Rafael, building on Todd's presentation)
  - AI
- A planning committee will be established to further develop the agenda. Proposed members include Van, Allison, Mark, Leann, and Pamela.
- Van noted the opportunity to explore new and different topics, with ideas anticipated from ACEC.

### **Update on ACEC presentation on alternative delivery approaches Allison**

Mark initiated the discussion by posing a question: if the Legislature were to provide \$1 billion for preservation, how would WSDOT deliver that work? Todd responded by noting that while there is a clear need and the ability to deliver projects quickly—similar to approaches taken in other states—the challenge is articulating a compelling plan. He emphasized that rather than reacting to funding, a more effective approach would be to proactively demonstrate how the work would be delivered if funding were provided, helping to create the necessary momentum for support.

From an American Council of Engineering Companies (ACEC) perspective, several ideas were discussed. On the delivery side, there was interest in partnering with AGC to develop an educational, interactive presentation focused on delivery methods. On the contracts side, the group discussed engaging ACEC National and other state DOTs to share best practices and lessons learned. This could include grounding the conversation in clear examples—such as cost-plus fixed fee—outlining benefits, challenges, and key considerations across various delivery methods. Additional ideas included hosting lunch-and-learn sessions, webinars, and bringing in national-level speakers to support broader understanding and dialogue with WSDOT staff.

Van noted that continued discussion will help clarify the broader picture and address outstanding questions. In considering alternative delivery methods, it was recognized that WSDOT has extensive Design-Build experience, and collaboration with AGC would be valuable. Todd's initial question was identified as a useful starting point for further brainstorming around what is feasible, how industry can support delivery, and what the state is capable of executing.

Evan raised questions about prioritization, specifically how to define and structure a program if funding were provided. He noted the importance of identifying deliverable project elements that could demonstrate value to the public without detracting from other critical needs. This was acknowledged as both an important consideration and a complex challenge.

Mark expressed concern about relying solely on virtual formats such as lunch-and-learns, suggesting that the topic warrants a dedicated in-person session of approximately half a day to allow for deeper discussion. Todd agreed, noting the difficulty of scheduling but reinforcing the importance of in-person engagement for complex topics. Van suggested incorporating this discussion into the Annual Meeting, potentially as a focused subset to advance the conversation.

Additional ideas included using facilitated sessions or a structured series of discussions tailored to specific problem statements. It was noted that WSDOT has strong facilitation resources that could support productive and efficient dialogue. The topic will be brought to a smaller working group for further development, with the intent of returning to the larger group with a proposed path forward.

### **MS Teams Check in – Leann**

Leann did a check in to see who is still having issues, and shared that it is best to work one on one to work through challenges. She will reach out to the folks who mentioned they are having challenges.

### **Upcoming Meetings**

- 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:**

- The Charter will be updated with the newly adopted Mission and Vision Statement.
- The brainstorming document will be shared for another week.
- Mark will reach out to Ahmer Nizam about the Heal Act.
- Van will reach out to legislators to present at the Annual meeting.
- Request volunteers for Annual Meeting planning.

- Leann will schedule planning sessions and include the agendas for the past two annual meetings.
- Leann will contact the members who are having issues with their Teams access

**Adjourn**