



Palouse Regional Transportation Planning Organization

Serving Asotin, Columbia, Garfield, and Whitman Counties

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Palouse RTPO Transportation Policy Board (TPB) Meeting Minutes

Meeting was held via zoom

Tuesday, September 12, 2023

10:00 AM – 11:00 AM

1. Welcome/Call to Order/Introductions.

Those present included:

Name	Representing
Rebecca Couch	Palouse RTPO Director
Greg Figg	WSDOT
John Shaheen	WSU/Palouse RTPO Board President
Robert Ward	Past President
Brian Shinn	Asotin County
Anna Ragaza-Bourassa	WSDOT
Ariel Medeiros	Student
Char Kay	WSDOT
Craig VanTine	COAST Transportation
David Ocampo	Columbia County Public Transit
Grant Morgan	Columbia County
James Wege	Garfield County
Jennie Dickinson	Port of Columbia/Board Vice President
Jenny George	Asotin Transit
Jeff Ruchert	Garfield Transit/Board Secretary
Laura Aukerman	City of Dayton
Mark Storey	Whitman County
Paul Gonseth	WSDOT
Russ Pelleberg	Asotin County
Todd Trepanier	WSDOT
Tom Handy	Whitman County
Mary Beth Clark	Nez Perce Tribe
Carter Timmerman	WSDOT

2. Public Comments. None.

3. Approval of Minutes from June 13, 2023. Jenny George motioned to approve. Craig VanTine seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

4. Winona Bridge Update (Todd Trepanier – WSDOT). Todd is the WSDOT Regional Administrator for the Eastern Region. He provided an update on the Winona Bridge which was

destroyed by wildfire in August. 2,600 rail cars annually use that bridge. An emergency contract has been executed for full bridge replacement and a new bridge is expected to be installed by early November. Mark Storey shared a similar update for the bridge that was destroyed by fire on the Bill Chipman trail. This bridge will be replaced with a steel bridge. Mark also shared that the county is seeing an increase in truck traffic with bridge out of commission. They will be collecting traffic data on multiple roads to gain a snapshot of traffic changes/impacts when bridges or other potential infrastructure becomes unavailable in the area.

5. **Avista's EV Level 2 Program (Paul Kimmell).** Presentation postponed to December meeting.
6. **RTPO Director Report.** Rebecca provided the following updates:
 - Grant application submitted to Rural and Tribal Assistance program; applications being accepted through late September.
 - Trail counters are now understood for data downloading/analyzing and one is available for use now.
 - Active Transportation Plan update – GIS work being completed, then website will be launched. Document needs to be finalized. Will be completed before end of calendar year.
 - RTPO website launched. Many updates are still needed and will be ongoing work.
 - RTIP update in progress. A bit behind schedule this year but will be brought to the Board for approval in December meeting. Reviewed by TAC first.
 - Public Transportation Division site visit completed. Two deficiencies were found: Ethics Policy (to be reviewed today) and Title VI policy. Will add Title VI update to the work to be completed by consultant along with full CPT-HSTP plan.
 - SFY23 Performance and Expenditures Report is due Sept 30. No board action required on that.
 - US95/SR26 traffic accident data being reviewed/compiled for Driver Safety Committee to review and see if extra messaging efforts are having any notable impact on accident reduction.
 - RTPO Director travel/training: attended WSTA conference in Vancouver, attending WSRO conference in Stevenson, WA, in October.

Brian Shinn asked if there was an opportunity with these bridge replacements to include conduit for fiber/broadband connections, adhering to WSDOT's "dig once" initiative. Perhaps an opportunity at the Chipman trail as well. Todd Trepanier indicated that there had been no discussion of broadband with the bridge at all. Jennie Dickinson said that Columbia County has asked for utility conduit with new bridges and recommends it with these bridges. Tom Handy agrees it is a great idea to help broadband cross waterways in the future. Char Kay mentioned an independent grant program for broadband expansion. Jennie spoke about resilience of conduit when built into a structure rather than added later (flood risk). Mark Storey indicated that Whitman County puts provisions in bridge construction projects that utility conduit be included. Grant Morgan indicated the same practice occurs in Columbia County.

7. **Financials Review/Approval.**
 - a. SFY2024 Quarter 1 financial dashboard presented for review and approval. Tom Handy made a motion to approve as presented. Robert Ward seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.
8. **RTPO Ethics Policy Update.** Rebecca explained that the administrative policy review/site visit with WSDOT identified deficiencies with the existing RTPO Ethics Policy. Necessary updates/editions have been made and the updated policy needs to be adopted by the Policy Board. Brian Shinn made a motion to adopt the policy as drafted. Craig VanTine seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

9. **Columbia County Roundtable** .
 - a. Updates/information sharing provided by Columbia County Public Transportation, City of Dayton, Columbia County, and Port of Columbia.
10. **Board Member Comments/Open Discussion.** A shoutout was given by Rebecca to Columbia County agencies for the excellent representation at today's meeting. Palouse RTPO shoutout given by Robert Ward. Todd Trepanier spoke in general about the state legislature not funding any maintenance or preservation projects for highways. The highway system is reaching critical and problematic levels of concern with the system deteriorating due to lack of maintenance and preservation measures.
11. **WSDOT Highway System Plan Update (Carter Timmerman, WSDOT).** Carter Timmerman provided a presentation on the WSDOT Highway System Plan Update. The presentation is attached to these minutes. Discussion followed, including the question of what the RTPO can do for reaching/informing the legislature of the critical need for roadway preservation and maintenance funding. Could be a topic we bring to the quarterly RTPO meetings. What are other RTPOs doing? Needs to be included as an issue in the UPWP, RTIP, etc. All agreed that the topic needs to continue to be discussed and we will revisit at a later meeting.

Meeting adjourned at 11:24 a.m.

Next Policy Board Meeting:

December 12, 2023 (zoom)

Spotlight: Whitman County

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