I-5 Bakerview Road Interchange
IJR Support Team Kickoff Meeting

February 25, 2015

Chris Comeau, AICP CTP
Transportation Planner
City of Bellingham (Sponsor)

John Shambaugh
Project Manager
WSDOT NW Region
Project Meeting Objectives

• Introduction Support Team Members & Expectations
• Review Project Purpose
• Review IJR Project Approach
• Develop Purpose and Need Statement
• Prepare IJR Methods and Assumption Document
Project Contacts

The City of Bellingham (*Sponsor*) has asked WSDOT to provide staff and resources to support the IJR Bakerview Process.

- **City Staff:** Chris Comeau, AICP CTP, Transportation Planner
- **Project Manager:** John Shambaugh, WSDOT NW Region, Mount Baker Area
- **Project Engineer:** Chris Damitio, WSDOT NW Region, Mount Baker Area
Ground Rules

Agreeing to meeting norms or “ground rules” in advance can help to make meetings more productive, shorter, and less frustrating.

• Begin and end on time
• Stay on subject and follow the agenda.
• One person speaks at a time.
• Listen to understand, not to contradict.
• Respect the views of others.
• Check your understanding by asking questions.
• Silence is agreement.
• Attack problems, not people.

Are there other Issues that we should be considering?
Overview of Problem and Need for Access Change

Interstate 5 / Bakerview Interchange
West Bakerview / Interstate 5 Overpass
Brief History (1965-2009)

• **1965-1968**: Interstate 5 constructed through Bellingham

• **1975**: WSDOT constructs Bakerview / I-5 interchange

• **1998**: Bellingham reconstructs West Bakerview Road from 2-lane rural standard to current 5-lane urban standard at a cost of $12 million
  - Local Improvement District (LID) created along West Bakerview to recover City investment for sewer, water utilities beneath street
  - City Council up-zones properties abutting West Bakerview from residential to commercial to raise land value and off-set cost of L.I.D. to property owners

• **June 2005-2006**: Bellingham Comprehensive Plan identifies Bakerview / I-5 interchange as a future transportation bottleneck and safety concern

• **November 2008**: WSDOT “Fairhaven to Slater Interstate 5 Master Plan”
  – $1.6 billion in total transportation improvement costs
  – “Single Point Urban Interchange” (SPUI) - Bakerview / I-5 – Cost = $40 million

• **2009**: 174-acre annexation proposed on west side of W. Bakerview/I-5 interchange
Existing & Planned Arterial Connections
Commercial Trucking Routes / Traffic Circulation

Designated Truck Routes

Heavy Traffic Volumes
Traffic Congestion and its Effect on Transit

- Three WTA transit routes on W. Bakerview overpass (Routes 3, 4, & 55)
- According to WTA, significant traffic congestion on overpass already affects on-time performance of WTA routes 3, 4, & 55
- Adopted Comp Plan transportation goal TG-25 “Support WTA efforts to meet service standards to protect average transit service speed on arterials as identified in the WTA's 2004 Strategic Plan.”
- WTA was included in the multi-jurisdiction Value Planning Study and is in full support of the W. Bakerview Arterial Safety & Overpass Improvements
Proposed Annexation
174 acres with 650,000 SF Mixed Development
Brief History (2009-2013)

• **2009-2010:** I-5 Master Plan recommendations are not within funding reach of either WSDOT or any local jurisdictions, not likely to be constructed in foreseeable future

• **April 2011:** The WSDOT “I-5/Bakerview Interchange Value Planning Study (VPS)” was a collaborative multi-agency effort WSDOT, City, WCOG, County, Port, WTA

• **June 2011:** VPS Option 1. Bellingham Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)

• **May – December 2011:** Bellingham creates local funding partnership with Whatcom County, Port, Fred Meyer, Economic Development Investment Board

• **November 2011:** Bham TIB grant $1.5 million to bridge funding gap between total project cost and committed local funding partnership of $1.7 million

• **July - December 2013:** City constructs VPS Option 1. – actual cost = $3.5 million
What Did the WSDOT 2011 VPS Include?

Recognition that 2008 I-5 Master Plan recommendation for reconstruction of interchange to a SPUI is neither practical nor affordable (VPS pp iii and 11)

Construction of a SPUI at this location is not affordable—our preliminary estimates suggest that the project could cost $40 million.

With mitigation for environmental impact and storm water, a SPUI is probably far more expensive than $40 million

Analysis of 6 Alternatives forecast to Year 2030

Our initial review considered six improvement options:

- Option 1: Minor widening and striping
- Option 2: New northbound on-ramp
- Option 3: Roundabouts at ramp intersections
- Option 4: Additional lane over I-5
- Option 5: Re-align Pacific Highway to tie into Bakerview Road/I-5 northbound off-ramp
- Option 6: Diverging Diamond Interchange

Long-range plans call for a new interchange at I-5/Bakerview.
VPS “Option 1.” Minor widening and restriping

Recommended lower-cost option—Minor widening and restriping

Funding partnership created May – December 2011 to fill “Unknown” Funding Gap

✓ Port of Bellingham – Airport Master Plan Mitigation $500,000
✓ Whatcom County - 2012-2017 TIP (W. Maplewood – Bennett) $100,000
✓ Economic Development Investment Board grant $300,000
✓ Economic Development Investment Board low-interest loan $350,000
✓ Fred Meyer Corporation - Dual left turn lanes at Dover/W. Bakerview $100,000
✓ City of Bellingham Street Fund $650,000
✓ WA Transportation Improvement Board (Grant Funding Request) $1,500,000

$3,500,000
Brief History (2014-present)

- **2010-2015**: Multiple large-scale commercial developments, over 600 hotel rooms, and over 200 apartments constructed, approved, or in permit review.

- **June 2014**: VPS Option 2. New northbound on-ramp at W. Bakerview/I-5 adopted as an unfunded project in Bellingham Transportation Improvement Program

- **July 2014**: VPS Option 2 adopted by MPO/RTPO Policy Board: Regional Priority #3

- **September 2014**: Bellingham written request to WSDOT for W. Bakerview/I-5 IJR

- **October 2014 – present**: Bellingham working with owners of property already approved for 77-room motel between Pacific Highway and I-5 to acquire ROW

- **December 2014**: Bellingham adopts local budget funding for W. Bakerview/I-5 IJR

- **February 2015**: WSDOT-Bellingham IJR kick-off for W. Bakerview/I-5 IJR

- **December 2015**: Hopeful completion of W. Bakerview/I-5 IJR?

- **2016 and beyond** .......... Search for construction funding
Recent Development & Projects Under Review
Traffic Studies Surrounding I-5/W. Bakerview

Transportation Impact Analysis (TIA) required by City of Bellingham and others since 2008

- Oxford Suites Hotel, Meridian Street, 105 rooms
- Marriott Hotel, Northwest Avenue, 160 rooms
- Hilton Home Hotel, Northwest Avenue, 105 rooms
- Pacific Plaza Motel, Pacific Highway, 77 rooms
- La Quinta Hotel, West Bakerview Road, 87 rooms
- BioLife Plasma Center, Aldrich/W. Bakerview, 16,800 SF Medical
- Bellingham Airport Master Plan for Future Expansion
- Whatcom County Correctional Facility LaBounty Road, Ferndale
- Costco, Arctic/Mahogany, 160,000 SF Store; 24-pump Gas Station; 3,500 SF Restaurant
- PMF West, Pacific Highway, 144,100 SF Shopping Center
- Bennett-Bakerview Proposed Annexation, Airport Dr/I-5, 650,000 SF Commercial
- PMF East, Arctic/W. Bakerview, 61,000 SF Shopping Center (*Includes NB on-ramp*)
- Park Place Residential, Northwest/Sterling, 150 Mid-rise Apartments
- Mersey Residential Subdivision, Mahogany/Arctic, 440 Homes (SF+MF) (*Includes NB on-ramp*)

Additional development included as "pipeline projects" in several TIAs listed above include:

- Holiday Inn Hotel, Airport Way, 150 rooms
- Anvil Corporate Office Bldg, Airport Way, 35,000 SF
- Airport Park-N-Fly lots, Airport/Maplewood/Bennett, 2,000 spaces
- West Cordata Green Residential, June Road, 344 homes (SFD + MFD)
- Bellingham Housing Authority, West Bakerview Road, 50 Mid-rise Apartments
“Although there is no funding currently available for improvements, *the Value Planning Study provides a blueprint for local jurisdictions and legislators as they determine funding for future projects* and it will position participating agencies to take advantage of project construction partnerships.” (VPS, p 25)

Bellingham followed the recommendation in the 2011 WSDOT VPS and took the lead to create a funding partnership (within 7 months) and construct overpass improvements (within 24 months) for VPS Option 1.

Bellingham is ready to move forward with VPS Option 2. (New northbound on-ramp to I-5) and is re-engaging with WSDOT, FHWA, and local agencies to conduct an official IJR process, as recommended by the 2011 WSDOT VPS.
Overview

Interstate Justification Report

IJR 101

Additional Information On the IJR process is available in the WSDOT Design Manual Chapter 550

IJR Overview

FHWA’s Policy

“It is in the national interest to maintain the Interstate System to provide the highest level of service in terms of safety and mobility. Adequate control of access is critical to providing such Service”

The Primary Objectives of the IJR process:

• Improve Safety and Operational Integrity of the Interstate System and Other Limited Access Routes

• Encourage appropriate use of the Interstate and limited Access Freeway Routes along with local highway systems

• Ensure coordination of local land use, transportation planning, and access control
How Are IJR’s Processed and What is its Purpose?

The Federal Highway Administration and WSDOT policy requires the formal submission of a request to either break or revise existing access.

- Federal law requires the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) to approve all revisions to the Interstate system, including changes to limited access in accordance with Section 111 of Title 23 United States Code.
- The IJR process documents the assumptions and design of the preferred alternative, the planning process, the evaluation of the alternatives considered, and the coordination that supports and justifies the request for an access revision.
- The IJR process establishes an IJR Support Team to help integrate the planning, programming, environmental, traffic safety, and design efforts that lead to development of a proposal.
What Will Be Accomplished During the Process?

- Formation of the IJR Support Team.
- Develop Purpose & Need Statement
- Develop a Methods and Assumption Document
- Conduct a Feasibility Analysis (traffic, collision, geometric analysis)
- Environmental Scan and Conduct a NEPA Analysis
- If warranted, Develop an Interchange Justification Report (IJR)
IJR Key Deliverables

• **Methods and Assumptions Document**
  This document is developed to record assumption used in the IJR, along with analysis methodologies, criteria, and support team decisions.

• **Feasibility Analysis**
  The Feasibility Analysis identifies the segments of both the local and regional network that are currently experiencing congestion or safety deficiencies, or where planned land use changes will prompt the need to evaluate the demands on the capacity of the transportation system. *(existing studies)*

• **Interchange Justification Report (IJR)**
  An IJR is a stand-alone document that includes the necessary supporting information needed to request a new access or revise and existing access to an Interstate or other limited access highway.
Expectations of Support Team

• Provide general policy input and insight to the project team regarding issues affecting the project

• Come prepared to discuss items on the agenda

• Review project deliverables and/or project summary information when requested

• Assist in identification of alternatives, options and or strategies consistent with the projects purpose and need

• Once project decisions are made the Team will work to honor those decisions and avoid reopening issues that have already been resolved or decided

Are there other issues that should be added?
What is the Support Teams Role?

- Develop processes for reaching agreement
- Review regional and state transportation plans for consistency
- Develop Purpose and Need Statement
- Identify the Study Area
- Develop and Endorse the Methods and Assumptions Document
- Evaluate Data and identify possible Alternatives
- Review Result to determine if IJR is Warranted
- Ensure the compatibility of data used in adjacent or overlapping studies
- Ensure integration of analysis on environmental, operations, safety and other pertinent analysis for study
What Resources Do We Have?

- City of Bellingham Comprehensive Plan
- Whatcom County Comprehensive Plan
- WCOG Regional Transportation Plan
- WSDOT I-5 Fairhaven to Slater Master Plan
- WSDOT I-5/Bakerview Value Planning Study
- Bellingham International Airport Master Plan
- Washington Transportation Plan
- WSDOT Moving Washington Strategy
- FHWA & WSDOT Guidance, Requirements and Policies

Are there other Resources we should be considering?
Eight IJR Policy Points

1. Need for the Access Revision
2. Reasonable Alternatives
3. Operational and Collision Analyses
4. Access Connections and Design
5. Land Use and Transportation Plans
6. Future Interchanges
7. Coordination
8. Environmental Processes
Policy Point 1: Need for the Access Revision

What are the current and projected needs? Why are the existing access points and the existing or improved local system unable to meet the proposal needs? Is the anticipated demand short or long trip?

Key Issues.

• Describe the needs being addressed, and define the current problem or deficiency that the project is looking to address or overcome.

• Demonstrate that improvements to the local transportation system and the existing interchanges cannot be improved to satisfactorily accommodate the design year travel demands.

• Describe traffic mitigation measures considered at locations where the level of service (LOS) is (or will be) below agreed-upon service standards in the design year.
Policy Point 2: Reasonable Alternatives

Describe the reasonable alternatives that have been evaluated.

Key Issues.

- Alternatives include the design options, locations, project phasing, and transportation system management-type improvements such as ramp metering, public transportation, and HOV facilities.

- The alternatives analysis must be the same as that used in the environmental documentation.

- Documentation must be provided on why alternatives were omitted or dismissed from further consideration.

- Demonstrate that improvements to the local transportation system and the existing interchanges cannot be improved to satisfactorily accommodate the design year travel demands.
Policy Point 3: Operational and Collision Analyses

How will the proposal affect safety and traffic operations at year of opening and design year?

Key Issues.

• Describe the needs being addressed, and define the current problem or deficiency that the project is looking to address or overcome.

• Demonstrate that improvements to the local transportation system and the existing interchanges cannot be improved to satisfactorily accommodate the design year travel demands.

• Describe traffic mitigation measures considered at locations where the level of service (LOS) is (or will be) below agreed-upon service standards in the design year.
Policy Point 4: Access Connections and Design

*Will the proposal provide fully directional interchanges connected to public streets or roads, spaced appropriately, and designed to full design level geometric control criteria?*

**Key Issues.**

- Provide for all directions of traffic movement on Interstate system-to-system type interchanges, unless justified.
- A proposed new or revised interchange access must connect to a public freeway, road, or street and be endorsed by the local governmental agency or tribal government having jurisdiction.
- Explain how the proposed access point relates to present and future proposed interchange configurations and the *Design Manual* spacing criteria.
Policy Point 5: Land Use and Transportation Plans

Is the proposed access point revision compatible with all land use and transportation plans for the area?

Key Issues.

• Show that the proposal is consistent with local and regional land use and transportation plans.

• Before final approval, all requests for access point revisions must be consistent with the regional or statewide transportation plan.

• If the proposed access is not specifically referenced in the transportation plans, define its consistency with the plans and indicate the process for the responsible planning agency to incorporate the project.
Policy Point 6: Future Interchanges

*Is the proposed access point revision compatible with a comprehensive network plan? Is the proposal compatible with other known new access points and known revisions to existing points?*

**Key Issues.**

- The report must demonstrate that the proposed access point revision is compatible with other planned access points and revisions to existing points.
- Must reference and summarize any comprehensive freeway network study, plan refinement study, or traffic circulation study.
- Explain the consistency of the proposed access point revision with those studies.
Policy Point 7: Coordination

*Are all coordinating projects and actions programmed and funded?*

**Key Issues.**

- When the request for an access point revision is generated by new or expanded development, demonstrate appropriate coordination between the development and the changes to the transportation system.

- Show that the proposal includes a commitment to complete the other non-interchange/non-intersection improvements that are necessary for the interchange/intersection to function as proposed.

- All elements for improvements are encouraged to include known fiscal commitments and an anticipated time for completion.

- If the project is to be constructed in phases, it must be demonstrated in Policy Point 3 that each phase can function independently and does not affect the safety and operational efficiency of the freeway.
Policy Point 8: Environmental Processes

What is the status of the proposal’s environmental processes? This section should be something more than just a status report of the environmental process; it should be a brief summary of the environmental process.

Key Issues.

• All requests for access point revisions on freeways must contain information on the status of the environmental approval and permitting processes.
What is the Approval Process?

Interstate IJR Project Approval

• On interstate projects, a submittal letter is sent by the region through the HQ Access and Hearings Section requesting final FHWA approval of the IJR.

• Interstate access point revisions are reviewed by both WSDOT Headquarters and FHWA.
  – If environmental documentation has not yet been approved a finding of engineering and operational acceptability can be given.
  – If the environmental documentation is complete final approval can be given.

• Final IJR approval is provided when the appropriate final environmental decision is complete.
Define the Purpose and Need of the Proposal
Purpose and Need Statement

The purpose and need statement should:

• Describes the current traffic operating conditions
• Focus on benefits to the national/regional transportation system
• Addresses safety and or geometric improvements to meet current standards
• Improves traffic levels of service
• Be compatible with the existing and future roadway network

Support Team Comments

I-5 / Bakerview IJR Purpose and Need Statement Comments?
The Methods and Assumption Document is intended to be Dynamic and can be updated as conditions warrant.
Project Coordination

• Project Information will be provided to Support Team Members via email and a “project sharing website” hosted by WSDOT. Project information may include data, reports, graphics and other information.

• Meeting materials will be provided at least five days before the scheduled meeting.

• The Project Team would like to receive comments within 14 days following the request for review.

• The Project Team will provide agendas, meeting materials, and summary meeting notes.

• Comments and other Support Team inquiries should be directed to:

  John Shambaugh, Project Manager
  shambaj@wsdot.wa.gov
  360.757.5981

What other issues are important to you?
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<th>Description</th>
<th>2015</th>
<th>2016</th>
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<td><strong>No. 1 IJR Support Team Meetings - Kickoff</strong></td>
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<td>Project overview &amp; IJR 101</td>
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<td>Review Draft Project Purpose &amp; Need</td>
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<td>Identify Key Methods &amp; Assumption for the Project</td>
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<td>Review Draft Methods &amp; Assumption Document</td>
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<td>Identify Study Area</td>
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<td>Identify scope of Feasibility Analysis (data/analysis)</td>
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<td>Review Communication Plan</td>
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<td><strong>No. 3 IJR Support Team Meeting</strong></td>
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<td>Evaluate existing/future vehicle traffic forecasts in the study area</td>
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<td>Evaluate existing/future public transit and pedestrian/bike traffic</td>
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<td>Evaluate the regional transportation network and interstate facilities</td>
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<td>Conduct a collision assessment</td>
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<td>Conduct an Environmental Scan and determine Assessment Process</td>
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<td>Identify Existing and Future 2036 Needs</td>
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<td><strong>No. 4 IJR Support Team Meeting</strong></td>
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<td>Review Feasibility Analysis and Needs Assessment</td>
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<td>Identify First &amp; Second Level Screening Criteria</td>
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<td>Identify Reasonable Alternatives-All Modes (Regional and Interstate)</td>
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<td>Alternatives First Level Screen</td>
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<td>Document Alternatives and Screening criteria</td>
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<td><strong>Analyze Reasonable Alternatives</strong></td>
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<td>Apply second level screening criteria and prioritize</td>
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<td>Develop Graphic to show Alternatives</td>
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*Feasibility Analysis will utilize available existing data and analysis to the extent possible. Some new data collection and analysis may be warranted in order to address the eight policy points.*

Updated 02/25/2015
Next Steps

• Identify Data Needs and Assignments
• When can the Support Team Meet Next (March/April)
Questions

Contact Information:

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