

MINUTES U. S. 2 Safety Coalition Meeting
December 19, 2005
319 Main Street, Sultan, Washington 98294

The meeting was called to order at 7:04 PM.

Attendees:

- Dave Somers, Snohomish County Councilman
- Ron Wiediger, City of Sultan City Councilman
- Lon Turner, City of Gold Bar Councilman
- Lorna Goebel, Councilwoman, Town of Skykomish
- Fred Walser, US2SC Chairman and Chief of Police, Sultan PD
- Donnetta Walser, US2SC Vice-Chair and Mayor, City of Monroe
- Loretta Storm, US2SC Secretary
- Jeff Brand, US2SC board member and Lt., Snohomish Co. Sheriff's Dept.
- Josie Fallgatter, US2SC board member
- Mark Fallgatter, US2SC board member
- Jim Southworth, Monroe City Administrator
- Loreena Eng, P.E., Regional Administrator, Northwest Region, WSDOT
- Rene Zimmerman, WSDOT's Urban Planning
- Rick Mitchell, Northwest Region, WSDOT
- John Davis, Public Works, Snohomish County
- Steve Lewis, H. W. Lochner (Project Manager for RDP)
- Kristine dos Remesios, EnviroIssues (Public Involvement consultant)
- Chester Marler, Stevens Pass Ski Resort
- Jaki Robbins, Sultan resident

Self-Introductions all around.

OLD BUSINESS

Minutes approved and accepted as submitted. (Several members and Chairman Walser expressed appreciation for the completeness of the minutes.)

RDP Update (by Renee Zimmerman, Traffic Mgr. for U. S. 2 RDR)

Ms. Zimmermann introduced two RDP consultants, Steve Lewis (H. W. Lochner) and Kristine dos Remesios from EnviroIssues. She then gave a brief update of the RDP. Ten agency/jurisdictional interviews were held, which included King and Snohomish counties, PSRC (Puget Sound Regional Council), the cities of Snohomish, Monroe, Sultan, Gold Bar, Index and Skykomish, as well as Community Transit.

Kristine Remesios Update on Result of Interviews:

Ms. Remesios summarized the feedback that was received from these interviews. (The indented, italicized text that follows is a word-for-word transcription of her comments related to feedback she received from these meetings/interviews.)

- *In terms of how different partners have seen U. S. 2 change over the years, **safety is obviously a very major issue.***
- ***Traffic**, specifically on weekends and holidays.*
- ***Growth**, not only in population but also development, which has also increased crew cuts and train movements along the corridor which, again, adds to that safety issue. And all of these*

things have changed out of a lot of physical changes of things to address and manage these types of issues that are going on.

- *In terms of what **improvements** departments would like to see along U. S. 2, specifically intersection improvements were identified per jurisdiction. And we won't go over those, but there are definitely spot improvements that need to be made. But in general, access and turning management, capacity is just a major issue with all the traffic that we're seeing. And alternatives such as a bypass or even another east-west corridor or highway as an alternate to U. S. 2 or I-90 would be beneficial. The partners also said that they want to see short- and long-term improvements proposed so that we see some improvements made in the short-term so we're not waiting 30 years, 15 years to see some improvements made to address the high-accident locations along the corridor.*
- ***Collaboration** was noted, that in order to make a lot of these improvements we need to make sure that people are on the same page and they support the same issues in order to move forward to lobby together for the legislature and start paying attention in funding some of the projects that are necessary on U. S. 2.*
- ***Enforcement** was noted, especially in terms of regulating speeds along Highway 2.*
- *And **bridges** was something that surprised us a little bit, but didn't, that it was (sounds like, "karma"). Everyone said bridges are critical to the communities along U. S. 2.*
- *In terms of what the partners **would like to see result from U. S. 2 (is) a definite timeline for implementation, clear priorities from the partners.** Capacity needs – really need to be identified, especially within the right of way. People want to make sure that we are really realistic about what capacity can be maintained within the existing right-of-way without having to add more lanes in order to manage the demand that's out there.*
- *And then in regard to **pedestrian and non-motorized facilities**, really just safe and designated areas for pedestrians and bikes, too, just along U. S. 2, whether that's off of the corridor or right*

Ms. Zimmermann added that the interview process was very educational for WSDOT, as every jurisdiction had its own unique needs in addition to a common corridor-wide vision.

Zimmerman purposefully scheduled their working group meeting for this day, in order that consultants could attend the Coalition meeting, should they wish to do so. The working group team is comprised of members from the ten interview jurisdictions. One of the two goals for the working group team was to define the specific borders of the RDP corridor, which they decided was as follows: Bickford in Snohomish to the easternmost portion of Skykomish east of 5th Street. The second decision WSDOT requested that the working group partners make was to **break down the corridor into "logical" segments**. These three segments were defined as: Segment #1 will be described as from Bickford to Monroe, Segment #2 will be Monroe to the eastern limits of Gold Bar, and Segment #3 will be from eastern limits of gold Bar to Skykomish.

Zimmerman distributed two handouts: (1) milestones for the RDP project, stating their goal is to complete the final RDP by the end of 2006; and (2) a informational RDP update sheet. In response to Josie Fallgatter's question as to whether this information was on the WSDOT web page, Zimmerman said the update sheet was, but the milestone information was not quite ready.

Zimmerman has received a commitment from Snohomish County to underwrite the \$15,000 matching funds required for the \$100,000 PSRC grant (for public involvement and outreach). This solves a potential problem for budget constrained cities and said she would follow up with them. Donnetta Walser stated that she would also follow up with them to ensure the \$15,000 check is received. (The follow-up is suggested because the county has lost two key staff members, Peter Hahn and Tina Rogers, which might affect continuity.)

Zimmerman stated that she will continue to gather the data and analyze it, and will hopefully a portion available for the next month's Coalition meeting. She's starting to schedule presentations to jurisdictions and other groups. In January she'll be meeting with Startup's Water District

commissioners. In February she'll be meeting with Monroe's Chamber of Commerce, and requested that the Coalition advise her of any groups to which she should make presentations.

Josie Fallgatter asked for clarification on whether elected officials were included in these interviews/meetings. Zimmerman stated no, that at this point it only included staff. Gold Bar Councilman Lonn Turner asked with whom WSDOT met at Gold Bar, to which Zimmerman responded (PW Director) John Light, (GB city clerk) Hester Gilleland and briefly with Councilman Richard Norris.

Chairman Walser asked whether the Sky Valley Chamber had been scheduled to receive a presentation, which had not yet been done. She said she would follow up.

Josie Fallgatter suggested that Zimmerman also contact and make presentations to the school boards.

Loretta Storm asked whether there would be any written reports or summaries of the feedback and input received from agency/partner meetings posted on WSDOT's RDP web page. Zimmerman said they could do that. Storm then shared with the group a summary of a comment made on WSDOT's comment forum by Bill Goodwin of the Transpo Group, urging long-term strategic thinking and planning related to rapid or mass transit within the corridor.

Storm also mentioned to Zimmerman that there did not appear to be any public or "citizen" input forum scheduled within the Plan. Zimmerman responded that she understood and recognized the concern. She stated the target for the four planned open houses are the businesses within the corridor, but the public could feed into that process, as they are open forums. But the businesses are key. Storm asked how the open houses would be advertised, to which Zimmerman stated via email distribution, newspaper display ads and discussions with the Chambers of Commerce. WSDOT presentations to the various corridor city councils during their meetings are also scheduled.

Zimmerman explained that she has placed at least part of the onus for getting the word out on the RDP and the public venues on the working group and partners, in helping WSDOT brief their policy boards, elected officials as she cannot do that for all ten jurisdictions. But she will be making at least one or two council meetings of each partner city over the next 14 months.

Zimmerman also stated they're planning on having a booth during the Evergreen State Fair, attending an Art and Train Festival in Skykomish, Sultan's Shindig and other public communication venues to capture input from "regular folks." She stated her background is public involvement, and in her experience open houses do not seem to work very well; thus, she feels these types of venues – fairs, malls – are more effective. Chairman Walser mentioned the Coalition and community could provide some volunteers to help in that effort, which was a very welcome suggestion for Zimmermann.

Discussion ensued related to some of the various means through which the Plan could be communicated to the general public: Large posters in businesses, libraries and other public venues, Public Access TV, ski buses, Community Transit, etc. Chester Marler stated Stevens Pass would post something on their website. Snohomish County Councilman-elect Dave Somers suggested involvement/presentation to the County Council, Snohomish Co. Tomorrow and other more regionally-focused venues. Zimmerman indicated she has planned a briefing to them, as well as ICC. Donnetta Walser suggested revising the name of the open house from "Business" open houses to "Business and Community" open houses, which would broaden the audience/comment scope.

LEGISLATIVE AGENDA/ISSUES

Chairman Walser summarized the scope of the Coalition's legislative efforts for the 2006 session, the primary goal of which is "to become known."

Asked all parties interested in serving on the Coalition's Legislative sub-committee give their name and contact info to Loretta so she could coordinate a meeting to discuss legislative strategy. (Dave Somers offered his assistance, time permitting, as well as Josie Fallgatter, Mark Fallgatter, Loretta Storm, Lonn

Turner, Lorna Goebel, Jaki Robbins, and, of course, Fred and Donnetta Walser.) It was mentioned that legislative communication efforts need to be shared with the county council. Chairman Walser thanked the county for the \$15,000 in matching funds.

Chester Marler asked whether the Coalition was considering developing a website. Loretta Storm, who has been developing the site but has been stymied by lack of time, summarized the content that will eventually be housed on the site. A discussion ensued as to what content and visuals should be included; Marler suggesting “eye-catching” graphics and strongly recommended some other concepts. Storm invited Mr. Marler to check out the draft website and give her the benefit of his feedback and opinions, based on his obvious expertise in this area.

Statistics, comparison to other roadways’ funding: Lonni Turner asked whether anyone has done any research or analysis on funding “per mile” on similar highways, and how the U.S. 2 project might be negatively affected due to its over-size length. Chairman Walser shared that there is a group in Eastern Washington trying to do the same thing for their problems on U. S. 2 that the Coalition is doing, as well a group in Montana, but did not elaborate.

Storm commented that she was thinking along the same lines as Lonni Turner, and has spent a bit of time trying to find bases for comparisons in either funding, highway classification or other similar intelligence that could be helpful in giving an edge to the Coalition’s chase for budget dollars.

Josie Fallgatter suggested “spamming” legislators; i.e., sending Coalition minutes and other info to keep them informed of our activities. She suggested that samples of form letters or emails be authored which citizens could use in writing to legislators, and that these be posted on the Coalition’s website. This will be done, time permitting. Donnetta Walser stated that the “*Stuck in traffic? Call your Legislator*” signs along U. S. 2 were quite effective in generating calls to legislators, but they were removed. Plans are in work to re-install those again.

Snohomish Co. Councilman Dave Somers encouraged distribution of the Coalition’s minutes (or other info/updates) to both county and state elected officials. Lt. Jeff Brand suggested sending information/updates, etc. to other groups (Shasta, etc.) to possibly begin an expanded U. S. 2 dialogue outside the Sky Valley area. Chairman Walser suggested that that strategy might be a big too big a bite to take at the moment, and encouraged focusing on our area due to the flood of impending growth.

Gold Bar Councilman Turner suggested contact with the U. S. Navy and Monroe’s Twin Rivers DOC facility might be beneficial, in terms of generating support for the Coalition’s funding requests.

Storm asked Chairman Walser for specifics related to his primary goals for this session’s legislature. He responded that the first goal is to achieve First Contact with key legislators, followed by a request for needed funding to complete the RDP. The “long-term” strategy is to smooth the road for funding for the new biennium beginning in January, 2007.

In addition to an as-yet-unspecified number of visits to Olympia by Coalition members, a one- or two-page hand-out needs to be developed. The Legislative sub-committee will work on this.

NEW BUSINESS

Letter of Congratulations to Transportation Secretary Doug MacDonald: Motion made by Josie Fallgatter, seconded by Donnetta Walser, for Coalition Secretary Storm to draft a letter on his recent appointment. All ayes.

Chairman Walser shared that Secretary MacDonald has been previously supportive of U. S. 2 issues, participating in a few public meetings in the Sky Valley, and during one of those trips to Monroe was ensnarled in Friday night’ rush hour traffic.

Public Outreach for RDP and “Coalition”-building

Chairman Walser opened a discussion about how to communicate Coalition activities to attract new voices and members. Rene Zimmermann asked whether the meetings were advertised; Storm stated that the *Herald* did mention tonight's meeting, but it seems tough to get the newspapers to publish these.

Chairman Walser said some of his conversations with media members have resulted in other contacts, such as with KING and KIRO. Glen Farley from KING-5, in addition to using U. S. 2 to ski Stevens Pass, was involved in a "terrible head-on crash at Startup, so he has a personal interest in Highway 2." Chairman Walser said "there was a media feeding frenzy" the night Irene Foster was killed on U. S. 2 in Sultan, but he didn't see any coverage. He said that in his experience, a steady stream of "feeding" information and news to the media, other than when accidents occur, is beneficial in educating them and keeping them informed.

Lt. Brand suggested that the media be contacted ASAP following any major accident (especially TV), as they seem to respond to the flashing lights and activity, not only from the police vehicles but from city fire and emergency vehicles. Thus, each city's council should have a vested interest in such accidents, as their service infrastructure is affected, and, therefore, their financial bottom. He suggested that visits by citizens to the county council meetings would be helpful in keeping a light shined on the dangers of the highway and need for funding.

Storm asked Chairman Walser for details on the Foster pedestrian fatality – which Walser mentioned was the third pedestrian fatality in the last 2-2 ½ years – as the only "news" she saw was a tiny blurb in the *Herald* the day after the accident. He described the site of impact near the Sultan Pharmacy, the CT bus stop on the south side of U. S. 2. Another critical, but non-fatal accident occurred in the recent past when another elderly woman was hit at that same location. She sustained long-term head injuries. Sultan Public Works Director Connie Dunn is speaking with Community Transit and WSDOT to try to work out a solution to relocate the bus stop. Walser called the bus stop location "an attractive nuisance," stating that a good part of the problem results from elderly folks with diminished reflexes and kids/teenagers trying to beat the traffic.

A brief discussion ensued related to recent I-90 closures due to landslides, etc., which underscores the vital importance of an open and operational U. S. 2, to use as an alternative. Board member Mark Fallgatter, who works with many employees in a municipality in Seattle, frequently hears comments from them of their abhorrence in having to use/travel U. S. 2, because of its lack of capacity and obvious safety concerns.

Roadway Levels of Service on state/county roads related to FCCs (Fully Contained Communities)

Walser requested Storm to speak to this issue, as the subject was generated from her questions related to levels of service and impact fees/concurrency for state and county roadways. She requested that **Councilman Dave Somers** take the ball on that issue, due to his emailed response to her.

Following is a word-for-word of **Somers' comments**:

"There is no concurrency for state highways. Period. At all. It's my understanding that there is no concurrency requirement for state roads at all. It only applies to county and local roads and the adopted Level of Service (LOS) standards. The fully contained communities policies and ordinance that the council is considering now and will probably pass on Wednesday [i.e., Dec. 21], the traffic impacts of those have not been analyzed. They're not included in the environmental, the traffic analysis for the Comprehensive Plan they're looking at. And the reason behind that, I guess, is that they don't know where there'll be. So there'll be further analysis when there's actually some proposals put in place. But there's some other things -- I, I'm against fully contained communities. I'll be real clear about it. I think they're great on paper but they don't work. I mean, you're not going to get major business and employment centers to locate out, you know, in these areas. You're going to get a large housing

development, an urban density housing development. So the traffic is come along with that. There's several other things in the Comprehensive Plan which I think makes the situation worse, and one is there's a list of rural roads, but it has actually lowering the level of service from a C to an E. So they don't – so they won't bump into concurrency so they can permit these things. A step in the wrong direction. It's sweeping it under the rug. The County's Comprehensive Plan, as proposed, had about a two—ninety—something like that -- \$290 million unfunded road deficit for the 20 years, so they don't know where the investment to pay for it – and that's after they lower the level of service. So there's a whole bunch of buried costs in there. And there's also a proposal to do more designations of ultimate capacity, declare roads that are ultimate capacity. And I'm not totally clear on what that means. But my understanding is that it means that the county would say, "This road's at ultimate capacity. We can't fix it anymore, so it's what it's going to be. We're not going to spend any more money on it." So they can't take it off of the concurrency list, too. So there's a number of – Yeah, it's, uh, I think it's just – particularly for the rural part of the county – it's, it's very...it's very, very bad. It's, it's really walking away from – we've been trying to fix some of the problems. Now – And, and the figures also assume we're going to raise your property taxes and road taxes every year for the next 20 years to the maximum amount. So that's, that, even that deficit is assuming we're going to do the taxes increases every year. So, um, not good. There's also a proposal -- and this may or may not pass on Wednesday -- the current Fully Contained Communities ordinance says these things have to be 2,000 acres in size and one mile from, uh, an urban growth area boundary. And there is a proposal on the table to eliminate the distance requirement and the size requirement. And what it would essentially – and I have no (unintelligible) past it out—but essentially allow FCCs to be located kind of any size right outside Sultan or anywhere else somebody acquires a property. So I, I think that would be challenged in the Hearings Board. I don't think it meets the state standards, but that challenge, you know, is going to take some time. And I imagine there's going to be a lot of vesting going on, a lot of efforts to vest projects under the new Comprehensive Plan. So...that's the good news... Yeah, state roads -- [group laughter, Chairman Walser says, "Thanks, Dave!"] – yeah. So state roads conform with concurrency. We've – the county's helped fund some state road improvements in the county to get them moving because the State hasn't had the funding, but they are a bottleneck in many places in the County. The state roads – Highway 9 up at Frontier Village on 20th Street, down there south of Frontier Village – all throughout the county state roads are bottlenecks creating other problems, back-up problems. But the County has no obligation to pay for those or do anything. In fact, the County has to – with their Comprehensive Plan, they're supposed to propose a plan to pay for the new infrastructure. But in our last 10-year plan we didn't come close within what we said we were going to do. And this plan, you know, in the next 10 years, I don't know that we're going to come close either, but -- So it's kind of dismal. I think it's fairly dismal. And it kind of is going to take some time to shake out to see what, uh, sustains or [if there] are any challenges to the Comp Plan in terms of (unintelligible) coming. But that's kind of the situation."

A question (from an individual not I.D.'d in Secretary's notes), "FCCs, if they go through, they don't align themselves with the Growth Management Act, is that correct?"

Somers responds: "Well, yeah. There's a provision in the Growth Management Act that was actually tacked on later to allow FCCs and there's some criteria, general criteria in there. This – I think there's some problems with just the way the County's gone about looking at these. They may be susceptible to a challenge. I can't be more specific than that."

Board member Josie Fallgatter stated that we talk about Levels of Service like they mean something; it's basically like saying "it's hot outside"; it's a subjective measure of where things stand. When the legislature wrote the GMA, they realized they couldn't pay for state roads, so the Act was written for cities and counties, requiring them to have transportation concurrency; thus, when they decide upon a LOS, they're obligated to either satisfy/meet that LOS, or do something else. And that "something" could be reassessing their land use or lowering that LOS. The reason the State is relieved of that

concurrency requirement is because they knew they couldn't pay for it, and if they required cities to have concurrency or else halt development until the problem is fixed, they'd essentially be forcing the cities and counties to pay for portions of the state roadways. It sounds as if Snohomish County has chosen to pay for some of those state obligations. But the issue "out here" (location uncertain -- Sultan? Sky Valley?) is whether or not it's a fully contained community, all of the growth will impact our actually on-the-road capacity. Not sure what the answer is or how you can apply pressure on the State, unless it's done legislatively to enact concurrency for themselves. But why would they do that when they know they cannot pay for it.

Somers responded: "I think you need to be a little bit careful about that, too, because all of a sudden then you put the State in a position to dictate land use and zoning to local communities, which the law (unintelligible) specifically prohibits. I understand what you're saying, but you've got to be real careful about the domino effect that would affect your ability as a local community and a local agency to control your own destiny. So there's some of those discussions that have to go on as well."

Storm asked Somers his opinion on the future of RTID as a catalyst for funding U. S. 2 improvements, as mentioned by Loreena Eng. Somers responded that he thinks they may take another shot at it, as it's the single and only existing self-funding mechanism for "local"/county agencies have at the moment. I realizes it's become bogged down and it's been "boxed up" with King County, but they've considered revising the formula and the process, so perhaps it will work its way out of the morass it seems to be in, or another entity may take its place.

Snohoco's John Davis offered the following on the FCC/LOS issue: "Just to provide a little bit of information on what the legislation related to fully contained communities that the council is looking at, whether it contains on transportation mitigation requirements, I think the bottom line is it requires full disclosure of the impacts and the total cost of all those impacts, but it does not necessarily require the developer to pay for all those costs. Where that is sorted out is in the developer agreement, which is developed – The way it works is the applicant comes in for an initial site screening. Then it goes into this thing which is kind of a very broad permit approval. Well, at the same time as the permit approval process, the broad permit approval process is running, the council and the developer are developing this developer agreement. And the developer agreement is where it sets out the specifics about who is going to pay for what, and what the timeline is for paying for it. And both of these things come together back to the county council. The county council then has final say over both the permit approval and the developer agreement. So I think that's a little point of information on what the fully contained communities have to say—or what the legislation says about traffic mitigation requirements and who pays for that."

Somers offered some background re the politics of this situation: "Talk about the politics a little bit, though. I think all – or at least four of the council members, I don't know if Jeff (Sax) is in favor of the FCC proposal and the county executive has supported it and proposed it – and one of the issues we're dealing with and I'm going to be struggling with is the more urban districts – part of this is they look at this as a way to get population that they don't have to deal with, because they have folks that don't like – you know, they're fighting the condominiums in Edmonds, for example – somebody torched one the other day. There's a proposal for an urban center right at 124th and I-5, the drive-in there, [they want] to build an urban center there. That got down-zoned because the local citizens there don't want density, and it's right on the I-5 corridor. If you're not going to densities [there], I don't know where they're going to put it. So the view is to offload a bunch of population out here. And frankly, the council people from Everett and Edmonds and even southeast don't deal with rural districts, don't really know these issues and it just seems like there's great, wide-open spaces to people, you know? And so the political pressure there is pretty significant. We've got a fairly large hurdle to overcome. I've talked to other Democrat council members and they're...they think (unintelligible) sounds great to them. So we have a problem."

Board member Jeff Brand stated, that as a service provider in the county, he believes term "Fully contained community" is a misnomer, because neither they – nor the required services – are truly "fully contained." **Somers** supported that statement, adding that the FCCs would be "competing" with

existing services in the area required/used by existing communities. **Storm** suggested that perhaps the only (arguably) effective fully contained community was Australia when it was a penal colony.

Walser summed it up: “One thing’s for sure. No matter what they do, it’s going to impact U. S. 2 in a major way. So we’re going to have to keep an eye as part of our legislative group, I think. Because this highway, sooner or later, is just going to grind to a halt.”

Storm presented a design for Coalition letterhead/stationery; all agreed to adopt it.

Fallgatter opened a fairly extended Coalition discussion related to education of, and solutions for, pedestrian safety. Most of the problems cannot be legislated” and many are due to lack of common sense: diminished capacity (elderly or otherwise), teenagers, alcohol use, unsafe dressing (no reflective clothing, dark clothing, etc.), not using flashlights or other lighting device, distractive cell phone use, people doing paperwork or looking at maps while they’re driving, walking on the wrong side of the roadway (should walk facing traffic), etc. Fallgatter suggested incorporating safe pedestrian education into WSDOT’s RDP booth during the Shindig (or other venues); distributing reflective armbands, clip-on blinking lights, brochures, etc. Walser stated a “mini-grant” for safety could possibly be obtained for that purpose. He also stated this is an ongoing effort by all law enforcement agencies. And, ultimately, many crashes cannot be prevented because they are “people-related”: Smart, good people doing “stupid” (or inattentive) things.

Mark Fallgatter asked if any studies have been done to determine what is THE most effective factor in pedestrian safety. Rick Mitchell stated that whatever solutions have been attempted, eventually any “new” solution simply becomes, over time, just another part of the “overall” background. To his knowledge, there is nothing that is a real long-term solution unless it deals with a physical separation between the vehicular traffic and bicycles/pedestrians.