

DRAFT
MINUTES:
U. S. 2 Safety Coalition Regular Meeting
February 25, 2008
Monroe Library Conference Room, Monroe, WA

Meeting called to order at 7:01 PM.

A. ATTENDEES:

U. S. 2 Safety Coalition:

- Chairman Fred Walser
- Vice-Chairman Donnetta Walser
- Secretary Loretta Storm
- Treasurer Jeffrey Beeler
- Board Members:
 - John Seehuus
 - Josie Fallgatter
 - Mark Fallgatter

Other attendees:

- Jill McKinnie (Congressman Rick Larsen's aide)
- WSDOT Lorena Eng NW Regional Mgr.
- WSDOT Cathy George
- WSP Sgt. Joe Bussman
- Lonni Turner, Gold Bar Council
- Joe Beavers, Gold Bar Council
- Lorna Goebel, Skykomish Town Councilwoman
- Kim Kampmann, Radio Producer (www.ushighwaytwo.com)
- Ray Coleman, Gold Bar resident, US2 Advocate
- Stephanie Cog(?), Gold Bar
- Shelly Carpenter, Monroe resident (victim of U. S. 2 crash)
- Jessica Carpenter, Monroe resident
- Amber Carpenter, Monroe Resident

B. TREASURER REPORT

Checking account balance is \$80.05. Per Chairman, a \$2500 check has hand-carried to the Coalition's lobbyist.

C. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Approval of January 28 Minutes (submitted by Mark Fallgatter for Secretary Storm, who was absent at Jan.'s meeting)

- Board Member Josie Fallgatter Moved to amend correct spelling of Jim Kampmann's name, and add to "Old Business, Item B" Board authorization to

- pay \$2,500 to Rick Jensen. Seconded by Board Member Seehuus. Unanimous approval.
- Vice-Chair Donnetta Walser moved to approve minutes as amended. Seconded by Board Member Seehuus. Unanimous approval.

D. OLD BUSINESS

1. **Update on Traffic Safety Corridor project working group – Jeff Beeler:**
Discussions of design of a corridor-wide sign for U. S. 2 as an official Traffic Safety Corridor that will be an initial “kick-off” sign. Additional signs will be designed and posted (similar to those on SR 9’s) as the project progresses. Scheduled for March 6th (tentative) is a kick-off dedication at Sultan’s gazebo. (Chairman said he has addl. Information.) The last item of discussion involved in-depth statistics of crashes along the corridor broken down by several different categories (i.e., weather conditions, types, speed, etc.) to determine highest-crash locations.

Ray Coleman commented on a recent crossover crash that involved non-Sky Valley residents, and he thinks it would be helpful to know how many crashes involve folks who live in other locations. Lorena Eng stated accident data does not reflect such information. Chair Walser gave a recap of results of the Coalition’s “Fix it Now” petition which reflected 45% of signatories were “non-Sky Valley” residents.

Storm asked if the sign as proposed was amenable to change? Beeler indicated reticence by the WTSC as they’re getting down to crunch time on the corridor kick-off. Both Beeler and Storm indicated the sign’s message and impact was too weak. Federal standards preclude the inclusion of “U. S. 2” on the sign. Storm mentioned the lack of “corridor partner” logos which were supposed to be added; more importantly, the proposed sign was too “warm and fuzzy.” Chair Walser said one reason for the rush was because the Governor wants to know why the signs “weren’t up yesterday.” Further discussion ensued.

2. **Legislative Report – Fred Walser** – Chair Walser reported he and Vice-Chair had been visiting Olympia. Thanked everyone who came down to testify on Rep. Dan Kristiansen three bills. Said it was some of the most emotional testimony he’s ever heard, which was echoed by many Transportation Committee members. (The transcription of the testimony can be read at www.us2saftycoalition.org) Legislators said they’ve gotten the message (assisted by Gold Bar “Grim Reaper” citizens demonstration 9/18/07 along U. S. 2 to indicated crossover collision locations, timed for a busload of Committee members traveling to Eastern Washington. Transpo Chair Judy Clibborn asked Fred Walser to convey to the group the impact of that event.) Another request to Sen. Mary Margaret Haugen for additional WSP troopers resulted in needed funding. Gov. Gregoire plans on traveling to Monroe in mid-March to sign the bill (as a media event). Chair said U. S. 2 is now “up here,” not down on the floor. Dialogue re the 2009/2010 biennial budget, he feels that U. S. 2 is going to be at the forefront, and per two Transportation Committee Chairs.

Vice-Chair Walser gave a report re Monroe’s federal revenue appropriations request for the Monroe Bypass. One significant challenge is the paperwork tiger. Each congressman/senator has different application forms and paperwork requirements, which is time-consuming and burdensome, especially since they had little time in

which to make a timely submission.) She's met with Senators Murray and Cantwell and Congressman Inslee's offices had contacted her at the beginning of the month, but they got it done.

3. **Media Distribution – Interviews with U. S. 2 Victims – Jim Kampmann** - Gave summary of project and proposed distribution to radio, TV, public agencies, etc. Because of the length and detail of the interviews, and the time constraining limitations on air, he's also been developing a website on which full interviews of U. S. 2 victims and activists can be accessed. The Board was anxious to listen to Kampmann's soundtrack for a "Ken Burns-esque" slide show on the website which will also be used as an interest-tweaker to TV stations for broadcast. *[9-minute audio plays, very powerful interview & comments by victims. It was obvious that most of the members of the group were obviously deeply moved, including myself.]*
4. **TV Spots with Chuck Bolin** – Chair Walser gave quick summary of a radio series by Chuck Bolin, on which controversial issues were discussed. He has offered to help the Coalition. The Chair plans on speaking with Angie Ward, the Director for the Traffic Safety Corridor program (at the Washington Traffic Safety Commission) re available grant funding to get that accomplished.

E. NEW BUSINESS

1. **Media event re Bill-signing** and/or Traffic Safety Corridor Kickoff: Chair will advise when details become available.
2. **Fundraising for the 2009 Legislative Session** – \$2,500-plus is needed next year and that will be an "incredibly important" session for U. S. 2 funding. So someone needs to lead a strong fundraising effort and called for a volunteer chairman, which was Jeffrey Beeler, then called for others. Lonnie Turner said he'd approach his wrestling club to help out to see if they'd be willing to sponsor a car wash event. John Seehuus suggested the Coalition could use a Galaxy Theatre classic movie (he's the manager) to raise funds. The Monroe Arts Council is doing that now. Joe Beaver also volunteered.

WSDOT – Re \$10 Million for Safety Improvements – Chair Walser offered a summary of safety improvements proposed thus far, in particular (RDP Item #10), intersection improvements (left turn and right turn lanes) at Fern Bluff Road, and Lorena Eng's suggestion of "installing a westbound passing lane at MP 20.7 to 21.39" approximately from the WSP weigh station (Sultan, Old Owen Road and US2) to "just past the little chapel," which is also a HAC (High Accident Corridor). Chair countered by giving another "wish list item," which would be a center barrier strip at the fern bluff intersection, a seriously problematic location. Discussion re specifics ensued (especially re severe complications and backups at Sultan light due to driver short cuts on lower Fern Bluff Road). WSDOT NW Regional Manager Lorena Eng then explained the importance of "using the process" to gain input for decisions. The rationale (by staff, and others) given for the proposed passing lane was because of the number of accidents in that area (over the last nine years, 16 accidents have been caused by WB traffic crossing center line, all caused by people trying to pass). A long discussion followed, detailing past problems and future challenges, as well as how the \$10 million falls significantly short of needs. (For details, access the MP3 audio on the Coalition's website.)

Closing comments/discussion by board members:

- **Treasurer Beeler:** more comments re Fern Bluff Road issues; residents should welcome changes due to Friday night traffic, etc.
- **Secretary Storm:** Re possible closure of Fern Bluff Road, it was a “light bulb moment” for her; it makes so much sense; and feels temporary inconvenience to residents from closure of lower Fern Bluff would probably not be noticed “after a month or two.” Explained lack of Coalition communication (via email) was because of her major computer “blackout.” Thanks and kudos to Rep. Dan Kristiansen for the House Transportation Comm. Hearing. Re the proposed traffic Corridor signs for U. S. 2, she understands the rush to comply with Governor’s deadline. But a statement made in the Jim Kampmann’s promo audio by a U. S. 2 victim -- “It’s not how many people drive on the road, it’s how many people are dying on this road.” – just jumped out at her, and feels that says it all. “This” – holding up the proposed traffic sign graphic – “does not communicate the dangers on U. S. 2. And I don’t like it. And that’s not a very political statement, but when it comes to sorts of things, I don’t have much patience.”
- **Board Member Mark Fallgatter** – Everything he wanted to say has been covered.
- **Board Member Josie Fallgatter** – Question [for WSDOT], related to Fern Bluff Rd. intersection, are new intersections – such as the nursery at MP19 which continues to increase in size and the site of several accidents and/or close calls but fortunately no fatalities yet – being prevented or scrutinized for safety. She does not understand how they got a permit for the facility. Intersection improvements are listed on the RDP project list and that seems “nuts” to her. Short discussion re group as to how that project became approved. **WSDOT’s Lorena Eng shared, “It’s hard when we have somebody who owns property and who [has] access rights. We try to make them as safe as we can, but bottom line is [it’s] a property right, and unless the State doesn’t pay [for] that property, ‘cause, you know, it’s no longer viable if he can’t have access to it. We try to have access, you know, off of secondary frontage roads, but sometimes it’s just not possible.”** Board Member Storm said even in a wetlands situation where it’s wedged between a state highway and a railroad track? There’s something *very* strange about that development and it’s something I’ve been wanting to do for ages, is go down to the County and find out how that happened.” Storm noted later than the RDP allocates \$1.5 M in tax dollars to “fix” that private intersection. **Addl. comments:** the facility continues to enlarge (attracting more traffic), it has poor visibility and room available for ingress/egress.; how the business was allowed to operate as a retail facility which generates increased traffic rather than being restricted to wholesale, makes no sense.
- **Chairman Walser** asked Ms. Eng if she would add to the “work order list” that the area from Monroe to Sultan be restricted to “No Passing” except in approved passing lane areas.
- **Vice-Chairman Walser** advised she was elected last week to the Puget Sound Regional Council’s Transportation Committee as a representative for Snohomish County cities. She repeated a comment made by the Governor that because there’s 128 different agencies dealing with transportation issues, “it’s like an Eastern Egg Hung.” She said Crystal Hill and a Monroe Council member were both strong supporters. For years people have encouraged her to become more involved, “So she decided it was time to put in a stronger voice for east Snohomish County. And they knew where I was coming from and they still elected me.”
[laughter]
- **Board Member John Seehuus:** Believes closing the Fern Bluff intersection is an excellent idea. He related his personal experience when he lived on Mann Road, when residents banded together to close it off to avoid having it extended eastward some day. He also honestly admitted he’s one of the “offenders” of trying to short-cut the backups by using lower Fern Bluff Road.

Comments from members of the Assembly:

- **WSP Sgt. Bussman** announced “Mock Traffic Accident” Scene on March 14th (1:30’ish?; not yet firm) at Sultan High School; lots of involvement by agencies and students.
- **Jill McKinnie – Congrats to Vice-Chair Walser for appointment to PSRC** and asked Board and participants to “set a little bit of realism around the appropriation process. Last year there were a lot of requests and money’s very tight. Last year we got one highway project and it was the \$500,000 for U. S. 2. So it’s not like there’s a huge pot of money out there.”
- **Shelly Carpenter** [*Mrs. Carpenter was unfortunately sitting, not standing in the back of the room as she made her emotional statement, so many of her words and those of her daughter, Amber, were lost*]: The summary is that she and her family had a recent crossover accident and both cars involved were totaled. “I never thought it would happen to me.” As a result, they want to become involved in U. S. 2 activism. Her daughter, Amber, plans on working with the local high schools with slide shows, safety presentations, etc.
- **Lorna Goebel**, due to a recent accident on U. S. 2 where a foreign visitor assumed U. S. 2 was a divided highway and drove on the wrong side of the roadway, suggested that the State needs to be mindful of the influx of a tremendous number of non-English-speaking (from 109 countries) who’ll be visiting as a result of the Olympics. She urged them to appropriately improve roadway signage.
- **Unidentified Woman** – Her biggest concern is congestion. [*Could not hear her statement.*]

Meeting adjourned at 8:25 PM