



I-5 Marvin Rd to Mounts Rd Planning and Environmental Linkages Agency Coordination Group Meeting #2 Summary

Meeting purpose

The purpose of the Agency Coordination Group (ACG) meeting was to:

- Confirm Purpose and Need statement.
- Present and gather input on the updated Draft Range of Alternatives.
- Review and gather early input on alternatives evaluation criteria.

Meeting logistics

February 13, 2023, 1:00 p.m. - 2:30 p.m.

Virtual Meeting

Attendees

ACG participants

- Barney Remington, Federal Transit Administration
- Bonnie Shorin, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA NMFS)
- Bradley Beach, Nisqually Indian Tribe
- Bryr Harris, Federal Emergency Management Administration
- Carl Smith, US Coast Guard
- Dan Sacks, Joint Base Lewis-McChord
- David Troutt, Nisqually Indian Tribe
- Eric Grossman, US Geological Survey
- Liana Liu, Federal Highway Administration
- Marty Chaney, Natural Resources Conservation Service
- Noll Steinweg, WA Department of Fish and Wildlife
- Penny Kelley, WA State Department of Ecology
- Portia Leigh, WA Department of Fish and Wildlife

- Sharon Love, Federal Highway Administration
- Shaun Dinubilo, Squaxin Island Tribe of Indians
- Susan Buis, US Army Corps of Engineers
- Susan Sturges, Environmental Protection Agency

WSDOT study team:

- Ashley Carle, WSDOT
- David Molenaar, WSDOT
- Mark Krulish, WSDOT
- George Mazur, WSDOT
- Hayley Nolan, PRR
- John Perlic, Parametrix
- Kirk Wilcox, Parametrix
- Lauren Wheeler, PRR
- Lucy Temple
- Sharese Graham, SCJ Alliance
- Victoria Book, WSDOT

Meeting Opening, Purpose and Goals

The I-5 Marvin Rd. to Mounts Rd. Planning and Environmental Linkages (PEL) Study Agency Coordination Group (ACG) met for the second time on Monday, February 13, 2023. The WSDOT study team began the presentation by welcoming everyone, reviewing the agenda, and leading the ACG through introductions. The study team then provided best practices and guidance for engaging using Zoom features during the meeting.



The study team shared that the goals of the meeting were to receive ACG input and active participation and for the ACG to understand the PEL process. The proposed outcomes of the meeting were to confirm the Purpose and Need statement, gather input on the updated range of alternatives and gather input on the evaluation criteria for alternatives.

The team reviewed the roles and responsibilities of the ACG: to represent agency and resources in the study area, provide data and input on direction of the PEL Study, advise on alternatives and performance metrics and help build consensus and support for alternative(s) selection at the end of the process.

Schedule

The team reviewed the study schedule and status. The study is on track with the planned schedule, working to reach concurrence point number two in early March, which will focus on the Purpose and Need Statement. Concurrence point number four, planned for the end of June, will focus on the final PEL Report.

John Perlic (Parametrix) provided a recap of Meeting 1, held on January 11, 2023. During Meeting 1, the study team shared the project background and desired outcomes of the study, ACG members reviewed and provided feedback on the Conceptual Purpose and Need and Alternatives and existing conditions data sources, and the team introduced the Alternatives Evaluation Process.

Purpose and Need Statement

The study team presented the updated Project Purpose, which includes changes based on comments and input from the ACG, TAG and EAG. Changes to the Project Purpose are bolded below.

- Enhance mobility **and connectivity** on I-5 for passenger vehicles, freight, transit, and active modes and provide support for increased person **and freight** throughput.
- Improve local and mainline I-5 system resiliency.
- Enable environmental restoration and ecosystem resiliency at the I-5 crossing of the Nisqually River Delta area.
- Support economic vitality through reliable **and efficient** freight movement and access to major employers.

The team then shared updates to the Project Needs. Changes to the Project Needs are bolded below.

Enhance Mobility Needs

- Daily traffic growth on I-5
 - 111,000 (2012) to 125,000 (2019)
 - 1.5% annual growth
 - 106,000 (2020) Covid related
 - 119,000 (2021) rebound post-Covid
- Future 2045 Volumes—20-30% higher than today, or 150,000-160,000 vehicles
- **Truck volumes expected to increase 55% by 2050**

- I-5 JBLM Corridor South project completion in 2024—lane transition from 4 to 3 lanes
- Future southbound I-5 congestion at Mounts Road extends 7+ miles
- Intercity Transit bus service between Olympia, Lakewood, and Tacoma
- **With current growth projections for the area, there is not enough ridership potential to support High Capacity Transit (HCT) services such as light rail or bus rapid transit. Phase 2 of TRPC’s HCT work will further evaluate when, in the future, developing light rail and/or commuter rail might be prudent from a cost/ridership perspective.**
- Amtrak Cascades passenger rail service
- Regional active transportation connection between Thurston and Pierce County

System Resiliency Needs (no changes)

- Risk of I-5 infrastructure failures from:
 - Climate change and sea level rise impacts
 - Nisqually River channel migration
 - Flooding vulnerability
 - Northbound bridge age (85 years) and Sufficiency Rating (48 out of 100)
 - Substandard vertical and lateral clearance from truss design
 - **Seismic events**
- Effects of I-5 infrastructure failures:
 - Long detours from I-5 lane reductions or closures
 - Congestion increases on arterial streets

Environmental Restoration and Ecosystem Resiliency Needs

- Environmental restoration of natural processes and functions for:
 - Enhancing habitat for salmon and other species
 - Restoring natural tidal flow and river flow
- Ecosystem resiliency from climate change
 - Sea level rise effects on fresh/saltwater mixing zone
 - Extreme river flow event frequency
- **The current configuration of I-5 through the Nisqually River Delta has impinged on natural ecosystems and therefore affected tribal treaty resources. There is a need for the project to restore natural functions to improve the availability of and access to treaty resources for tribes.**

Economic Vitality Needs

- River navigability—commercial fishing for Nisqually Indian Tribe
- Truck Freight Economic Corridor
- Access to and from regional Port Districts
- Operational viability of JBLM and Washington State National Guard—part of Strategic Highway Network
- Access to destinations at Marvin Road interchange
 - Hawk’s Prairie Business District
 - **Quiemuth Village**

The study team paused to invite questions or comments from ACG members.

- Penny Kelley (Department of Ecology) asked a question in regard to the change to the Enhance Mobility Need: *With current growth projections for the area, there is not enough*



ridership potential to support High Capacity Transit (HCT) services such as light rail or bus rapid transit. Phase 2 of TRPC's HCT work will further evaluate when in the future developing light rail and/or commuter rail might be prudent from a cost/ridership perspective. If the existing system is inconvenient or inaccessible, then you won't have the ridership levels necessary to support HCT. How will you account for this barrier?

- Response: We're relying on input and analysis from TCP to inform decisions around implementing HCT services. There are certain land use density requirements needed to support HCT bus or commuter rail. Express bus service would still operate between the counties.
- Carl Smith (US Coast Guard) suggested that the river navigability need under Economic Vitality Needs should extend to all waterway uses in addition to tribal use.

Following questions and comments from the ACG, the team shared a poll to invite consent on finalizing the Purpose and Need for the study.

Poll #1: Do you support this Purpose and Need for the study and adoption into NEPA?

- a) Yes! (12/12 or 100%)
- b) No, I'd like to discuss further with the Study team. (0/0 or 0%)

- Shaun Dinubilo (Squaxin Island Tribe of Indians) shared in the Zoom Chat that the Cultural Resource Department of the Squaxin Island Tribe remains neutral for this project and normally is neutral on these undertakings.

Range of alternatives

The study team reviewed the alternatives evaluation process, sometimes called a screening process. The study is moving into Conceptual Level 1 Evaluation (March 2023) which will be followed by a more detailed Level 2 Evaluation.

John Perlic presented the changes to the to the range of alternatives since the first meeting. The study team:

- Added Design Options A, B and C to Alternatives 1 and 4.
- Added Design Option D to Alternatives 2 and 3.
- Included a shared-use path in all alternatives.
- Removed Alternative 5: Local Improvements in Yelm from the alternatives list to planned improvements.

Alternative 1: Operations Improvements

- Operations - Lane management for HOV's
- Land Use - Consistency with local plans
- Transportation Demand Management (TDM) - support for alternative travel modes including **shared-use path from Marvin Road Interchange (Exit 111) to Mounts Road Interchange (Exit 116)**
- Transit - **Express Bus Service**
- **Includes Design Options A-C**

Alternative 2: Widen I-5 for High Occupancy Vehicle lanes



- Widen I-5 for HOV lanes
- Shared-use path from Marvin Road Interchange (Exit 111) to Mounts Road Interchange (Exit 116)

Alternative 3: Widen I-5 for General Purpose Lanes

- Widen I-5 for GP lanes
- Shared-use path from Marvin Road Interchange (Exit 111) to Mounts Road Interchange (Exit 116)

Alternative 4: Convert GP Lanes to HOV Lanes

- Convert I-5 lanes from GP to HOV Lanes
- Shared-use path from Marvin Road Interchange (Exit 111) to Mounts Road Interchange (Exit 116)
- **Includes Design Options A-C**

Kirk Wilcox (Parametrix) reviewed the design options and conceptual images for each of the designs. Kirk emphasized that the design options provide more space for natural water flow and flood overflow channels in the area.

- Design Option A: 3,000' of elevated structure.
- Design Option: Extends the bridge section to I-5 south; 6,000' of structure (over 1 mile) allowing the Nisqually to move as desired. McAllister Creek would be closer to original pre-I-5 construction alignments.
- Design Option C: Involves I-5 on structure across the whole valley. Challenge is that I-5 is higher through the Nisqually interchange, requiring ramp structure reconfiguration.
- Design Option D: High Level Long Span Bridge. Removes a local road connection at the existing Nisqually interchange.

After presenting the range of alternatives and design options, the study team paused to take questions and comments from ACG members. Ashley Carle (WSDOT) clarified that WSDOT is beginning the process of reviewing draft alternatives with agency groups first, then will coordinate with tribes and the public.

Questions and comments:

- David Troutt (Nisqually Indian Tribe) shared support for Design Option D.
- Susan Sturges (EPA) recommended that the team clearly present how local access would be maintained for Design Option D.
- Sharon Love (FHWA) shared a link to the project webpage in the Zoom Chat: <https://wsdot.wa.gov/construction-planning/search-projects/i-5-marvin-rd-mounts-rd-planning-and-environmental-linkage>
- Marty Chaney (Natural Resources Conservation Services) asked how Design Option D would provide access to the Billy Frank Jr. Nisqually National Wildlife Refuge and local businesses.

- Kirk Wilcox (Parametrix) responded that access would be maintained using the closest exits for Marvin Road or Mounts Road and then using local streets to get to and from the Wildlife Refuge. For example, taking Mounts Road to Nisqually Road or Marvin Road to Martin Way. Design Option D does not provide the same amount of local access that options A-C would provide.
- Chaney asked if the team had considered impacts from north wind with Design Option D.
 - Kirk Wilcox (Parametrix): Yes, wind, seismic events, and other weather events would be taken into consideration for an option like D.
- What level of NEPA do you plan to use? If it's an EIS, does this process represent NEPA scoping?
 - Ashley Carle (WSDOT) responded that WSDOT will recommend an Environmental Assessment or Environmental Impact Statement in the PEL report later this year (2023).
- Would removed fill be carried off site?
 - John Perlic (Parametrix) responded that any fill removed would be taken offsite and grade would be restored to appropriate levels.
- Carl Smith (US Coast Guard) asked if WSDOT would reroute I-5 traffic during construction of a new bridge or if portions of I-5 will be in use while a new structure is being constructed.
 - John Perlic (Parametrix) responded that WSDOT is starting to explore options for construction and traffic staging. The study team expects to have more to share on construction at the next meeting.
- The Nisqually region is both a very important resource and an area that is restricted by the landscape. Would you leave room for future HCT infrastructure, like rail, in your designs?
 - John Perlic (Parametrix) responded that this project will not preclude future HCT in the corridor. For example, if we widen to the north and put a shared use path on the northside of I-5, we will maintain room on the southside for future HCT.
- What is the construction schedule?
 - Ashley Carle (WSDOT) responded, but to clarify this project currently does not have construction funds allocated and cannot presume a start date.
- As you are exploring design options, are you also thinking about maintenance of the roadway?
 - John Perlic (Parametrix) responded that the study team is taking maintenance and stormwater into consideration. We are starting to study what stormwater needs go with each of these options, maintenance access, sensitive areas of the valley and potential locations for stormwater treatment facilities. The study team is considering all of these factors as we're developing conceptual designs.

- Penny Kelley (WA State Dept of Ecology) asked, have you run into any contamination issues so far? I would like to coordinate early in the process and know who I should be in contact with.
 - WSDOT response: Contamination is one of the environmental categories that we will be analyzing. We don't have any additional information at this time.

Following questions, the study team shared a poll to confirm if ACG members were satisfied with the range of alternatives.

Poll #2: After reviewing the updated Range of Alternatives, do they include everything you expected?

- a) Yes! – (10/11 or 91%)
- b) No, I would like to discuss further with the study team – (1/11 or 9%)

Level 1 Alternatives Evaluation Criteria

The team shared the proposed criteria matrix. See slides for more detail.

Alternatives	Design Options	Alternative 1 – Operations Improvements			Alternative 2 – Widen I-5 for HOV Lanes				Alternative 3 – Widen I-5 for GP Lanes				Alternative 4 – Convert I-5 Lanes from GP to HOV Lanes			
		A	B	C	A	B	C	D	A	B	C	D	A	B	C	
Enhance mobility and connectivity on I-5 for all modes and providing support for increased person throughput	Accommodates active transportation and transit modes															
	Provides congestion relief for vehicles															
	Effects on adjacent roadways															
	Increases person throughput															
Improve local and mainline I-5 system resiliency	Complementary to local planning															
	Reduces the risk of infrastructure failures															
	Reduces the risk of infrastructure failures due to seismic activity															
	Reduces the risk of large vehicle collisions with the Nisqually Bridge															
Enable environmental restoration and ecosystem resiliency at the I-5 crossing of the Nisqually River Delta area	Incorporates environmental restoration															
	Promotes ecosystem resiliency															
Support economic vitality through reliable freight movement, access to major employers, and sustainable tribal commercial fishing activity	Freight reliability															
	Multimodal access to jobs															
	River navigability															
Support equitable outcomes	Minimizes property acquisitions requiring business or residential relocations															
	Minimizes the flood risk potential for EJ populations															
Relative cost of alternatives	Planning-level cost comparison															

Rating Scale

Lower Performing Higher Performing

Design Options

Design Option A – 3,000'

Design Option B – 6,000'

Design Option C – 12,000'

Design Option D – 14,000' – 15,000'

Questions and comments:

- John Perlic (Parametrix) noted to add 'freight' to evaluation criteria 'increases person and freight throughput.'
- Carl Smith (US Coast Guard) asked for a comprehensive schedule that includes opportunities for review, steps along the way, and how long the project will take.

- Bonnie Shorin (NOAA) asked, do all the alternatives consider stormwater? When does stormwater consideration enter in this process?
 - John Perlic (Parametrix) responded that the study team will develop conceptual layouts to ensure stormwater needs are covered at a higher level. We will build out those concepts in greater detail once we select an alternative(s) and move into the next phase of the environmental process.

- Carl Smith (US Coast Guard) suggested expanding the criteria for river navigability to include all users of the waterway, in addition to the Nisqually Tribe.
 - David Troutt (Nisqually Indian Tribe) agreed but would like to keep specific mention of the Nisqually Indian Tribe.

- Penny Kelley (WA State Dept of Ecology) asked if rail runs through the project area?
 - John Perlic (Parametrix) responded that there are Sound Transit as well as BNSF crossings. Design concepts includes consideration of rail within the study area. There may be a need to replace rail bridges if we add lanes to I-5.

- Kelley asked if rail should be added to evaluation criteria, or is it embedded in what you're already studying?
 - Kirk Wilcox (Parametrix) responded that adding rail to the criteria will not differentiate results. We will not realign any of the rail lines.

- Kelley asked if the cost criterion includes building and maintaining the roadway?
 - John Perlic (Parametrix) responded that that the study team is focusing on cost of construction only. We will also look at timing of construction for the various design options.

- Kelley asked if wetland, water quality, and 6PPD considerations are included in the criteria for 'incorporates environmental restoration'?
 - John Perlic (Parametrix) responded that those factors would be included in this first category: *Does the alternative restore environmental systems by improving fish passage, building and maintaining habitat, reducing impacts to river hydraulics and geomorphology, etc.?*
 - There are many environmental factors included that we may split up to examine in more detail in Level 2 screening. We will revisit these criteria.
 - Sharon Love (FHWA) added, this could also tie into earlier comments about stormwater.

- Eric Grossman (US Geological Survey) asked, are you able to share this version of the Evaluation Criteria?
 - Ashley Carle (WSDOT) responded that the study team will provide a copy of the Evaluation Criteria document in post meeting materials along with a request for review.

- Penny Kelley (WA State Dept of Ecology) shared that stormwater includes both cost and maintenance and is a key element of cost and environmental considerations. The study



team should reach out to the Demonstrative Approach Team out of WSDOT Headquarters to get feedback.

- John Perlic (Parametrix) appreciated the comment. John responded that every design option will have similar challenges determining how to manage stormwater. There are no stormwater treatment facilities in this region. This will be a key element as we move forward. We are not certain whether stormwater maintenance will become a differentiator between options, though a longer bridge structure may potentially allow more control for where water is directed.

Following questions, the study team shared a poll to ask if ACG members were satisfied with the Level 1 Alternatives Evaluation Criteria.

Poll #3: After reviewing Level 1 Alternatives Evaluation Criteria, does it include everything you expected?

- a) Yes, the alternatives evaluation criteria meet my expectations and my organization's preferences. (4/9 or 44%)
- b) The alternatives evaluation criteria include some of what I expected, but not all. (5/9 or 56%)
- c) No, I would like to provide the project study team with additional alternatives evaluation criteria to consider. (0/0 or 0%)

Next steps

The WSDOT team committed to the following next steps:

- Distribute meeting materials for review and feedback.
- Send additional request for review and comment on the Level 1 Evaluation Criteria.

The next ACG meeting is March 13, 2023.

The meeting adjourned at 2:30 p.m.