I-5 Marvin Rd to Mounts Rd Planning and Environmental Linkage

Executive Advisory Group Meeting #2 Summary

Meeting purpose

The purpose of the Executive Advisory Group (EAG) 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 21, 2023, 1:00 p.m. - 2:00 p.m.
Virtual Meeting

Attendees

EAG Participants

- Ann Freeman-Manzanares, Intercity Transit
- Brad Beach, Nisqually Indian Tribe
- Charles Markham, Joint Base Lewis McChord
- Christine Wolf, Port of Tacoma
- Dan Sacks, Joint Base Lewis McChord
- David Troutt, Nisqually Indian Tribe
- Mayor Debbie Sullivan, City of Tumwater
- Jen Tetatzin, Pierce County
- Mike Griffus, Pierce Transit
- Ralph Rizzo, Federal Highway Administration
- Rob LaFontaine, Intercity Transit
- Sharon Love, Federal Highway Administration

WSDOT study team

- Ahmer Nizam, WSDOT
- Ashley Carle, WSDOT
- Emma Dorazio, PRR
- Gaius Sanoy, WSDOT
- John Perlic, WSDOT
- JoAnn Scheuler, WSDOT
- Kirk Wilcox, Parametrix
- Lucy Temple, WSDOT
- Lauren Wheeler, PRR
- Rachel Durham, Parametrix

Meeting opening, purpose, and goals

The I-5 Marvin Rd. to Mounts Rd. Planning and Environmental Linkages (PEL) Study Executive Advisory Group (EAG) met for the second time on Tuesday, February 21, 2023. The WSDOT study team began the presentation by welcoming everyone, reviewing the agenda, and leading the EAG 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 EAG input and active participation and for the EAG 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 EAG: to represent agency and stakeholders 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 to reach FHWA 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 30, 2023, During Meeting 1, the study team shared the project background and desired outcomes of the study, EAG members reviewed and provided feedback on the Draft Purpose and Need, Conceptual Range of Alternatives, 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
- **Current growth projects do not support High-Capacity Transit (HCT) services – light rail or bus rapid transit (BRT) by 2045.**
- **Alternatives will not preclude future HCT**
- Amtrak Cascades passenger rail service
- Regional active transportation connection between Thurston and Pierce County

System Resiliency Needs
- 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 and **all waterway users, including 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**

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

a) Yes! (10/10 or 100%)
b) No, I'd like to discuss further with the Study Team. (0/10 or 0%)

Range of alternatives

The study team reviewed the alternatives evaluation process, sometimes called a screening process. The study is moving into 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 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 B: 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.

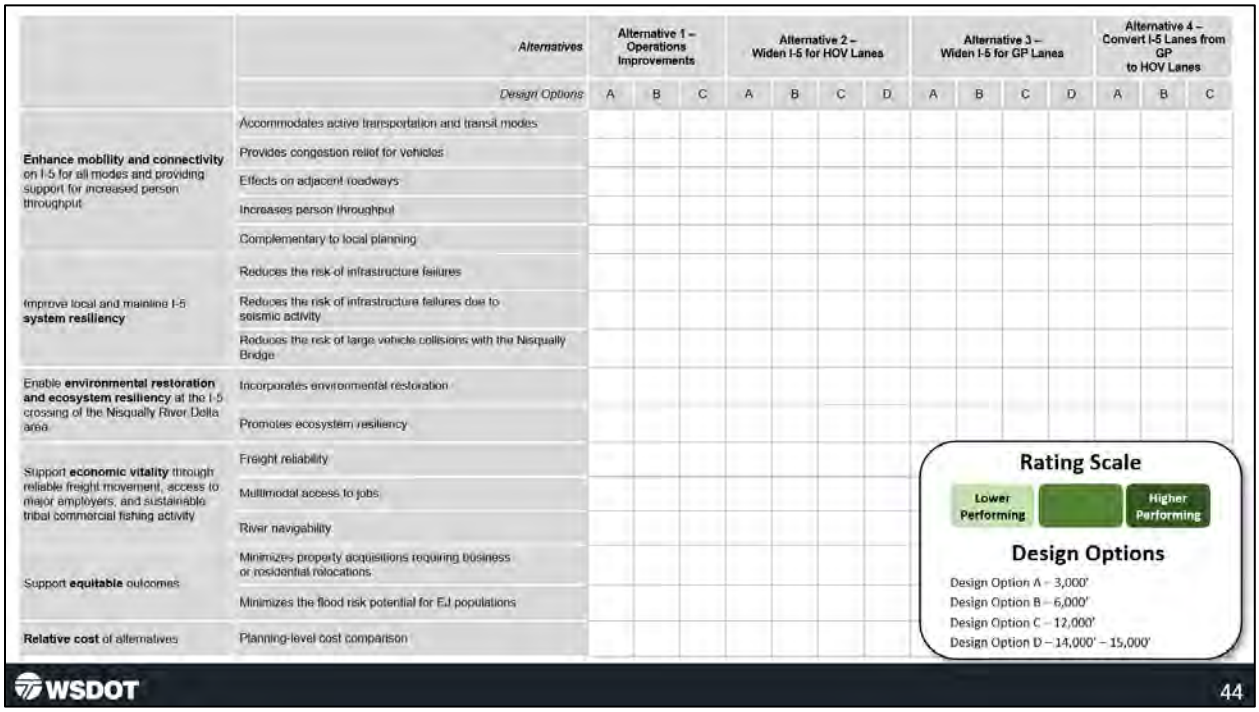
Poll #2**: **After reviewing the updated Range of Alternatives, do they include everything you expected?

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

Level 1 Alternatives Evaluation Criteria

The WSDOT study team reviewed the Level 1 Alternatives Evaluation Criteria for each Project Purpose category, shared feedback gathered during Agency Coordination Group and Technical Advisory Group meetings on February 13 and February 15, and provided a high-level overview

of how each design option for each alternative will be rated using the evaluation criteria. Below is the proposed criteria matrix. See slides for more detail.



	Alternatives	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		
	Design Options	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														
	Complementary to local planning														
Improve local and mainline I-5 **system resiliency**	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														

The EAG discussed the evaluation criteria for the following Project Purpose.

- **Enhance mobility and connectivity:** Based on feedback gathered in the Technical Advisory Group meeting on February 15, WSDOT will consider emergency vehicle response time impacts in the evaluation criteria. Access to existing transit facilities is included in the evaluation criteria for enhanced mobility and connectivity. Though current growth projections do not support HCT services before 2045, WSDOT will not preclude for future HCT needs in this corridor.
- **System resiliency:** The EAG discussed incorporation of stormwater impacts in the system resiliency needs evaluation criteria. The study team noted that stormwater design will likely not be a differentiating factor. Stormwater design will be considered during later phases of the project.
- **Environmental restoration and ecosystem resiliency:** Based on feedback gathered in the Agency Coordination Meeting February 13, WSDOT will incorporate consideration of stormwater and wetland impacts in the evaluation criteria.
- **Economic vitality:** Based on feedback gathered in the Technical Advisory Group meeting on February 15, WSDOT will incorporate consideration of impacts to businesses resulting from the removal of Nisqually Interchange and loss of local traffic in the evaluation criteria.
- **Support equitable outcomes:** No comments.
- **Relative cost:** Based on feedback gathered in the Agency Coordination Group meeting on February 13, WSDOT will incorporate consideration of capital costs, construction, operations, and maintenance in the evaluation criteria.

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

- *Yes, the alternatives evaluation criteria meet my expectations and my organization's preferences. (12/13 or 92%)*
- *The alternatives evaluation criteria include some of what I expected, but not all. (1/13 or 8%)*
- *No, I would like to provide the project study team with additional alternatives evaluation criteria to consider. (0/13 or 0%)*

Jen Tetatzin (Pierce County) responded that the alternatives evaluation criteria includes some but not all of what she expected, and expressed interest in additional criteria to measure operations and maintenance costs for each alternative. The study team reiterated that this request was echoed at the Agency Coordination Group meeting. The study team will incorporate consideration of capital costs, construction, operations, and maintenance into the evaluation criteria.

Next steps

The study team reminded EAG participants of additional opportunities to share feedback and shared to the following next steps:

- WSDOT will post meeting materials for review on the project page.
- EAG participants will review and share addition comments on Level 1 Evaluation Criteria between EAG Meetings 2 and 3.

The next EAG is scheduled on March 21.

The meeting adjourned at 2:00 p.m.