

APPENDIX A

Public Comments for the 2012 Metropolitan Transportation Plan Update

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Public Comments for the 2011-2035 Metropolitan Transportation Plan

The following comments were received as part of the public comment review period (November 18 through December 19, 2011) for the draft Spokane Metropolitan Planning Area 2011-2035 Metropolitan Transportation Plan:

From: Soden, Joel [<mailto:JSoden@spokanetransit.com>]
Sent: Tuesday, December 13, 2011 2:26 PM
To: Ryan Stewart
Subject: random thought/suggestion

I can't remember if I said this or not, but it might be helpful to have the baseline maps in the MTP. 2010 or 2008 are we still using? I just think that starting with 2015 doesn't show the whole picture of where we are now.

Thanks,
Joel

Response: Maps added. 2008 is the base model year.

From: Kim Traver [<mailto:kctraver@yahoo.com>]
Sent: Sunday, December 18, 2011 5:58 PM
To: Staci Lehman
Subject: Comments: Draft 2012 MTP

SRTC,

Provided are comments on behalf of the Inland Empire Rail Transit Association regarding the draft Metropolitan Transportation Plan for consideration in the final MTP:

1) Map 4.8 depicts the "South Valley Corridor" for future high capacity transit. Our organization fully supports and strongly encourages that this element continue to be carried in this and future strategic regional transportation plans. However, it is entirely possible that STA will not be the proponent for development of the corridor with respect to light rail. Instead a separate entity may design, build, and operate a regional light rail system - similar to what other communities have experienced regarding development of high capacity transit. Should the proponent be listed as TBD or SRTC as a place holder?

2) Preservation of the South Valley Corridor right-of-way for high capacity transit, presumably light rail, is currently listed as #22 in the long-term projects. Perhaps the total cost should be divided into increments for short term, mid-term, and long-term execution for better, more realistic programming and execution. Otherwise, waiting until 2026 to preserve the corridor will

be too late to preserve the corridor, i.e. it will be self-defeating.

3) Suggest the paragraph under Section 4, Page 27, regarding rail transportation be revised as follows; "Following the narrow failure of two advisory ballot items requesting support for the continued planning of light rail in the November, 2006 election, a group of concerned citizens organized in the hope of resurrecting the possibility of a regional light rail system in the south valley corridor and beyond. The group, called the Inland Empire Rail Transit Association has made available on their website (www.inlandrail.org) all the resources and information developed during the original light rail study, with the stated intent of educating, advocating for light rail, and pushing leaders to take steps to continue to pursue light rail, especially the near term preservation of right of way."

4) Suggest the paragraph under Section 4, Page 33, under public transit be revised as follows; "Another form of public transit that is discussed for the region on occasion is light rail along the South Valley Corridor. Citizens narrowly voted down two propositions in 2006 that would have supported continued planning for the creation of a light rail line from the City of Liberty Lake to downtown Spokane, but a group called the Inland Empire Rail Transit Association are championing the cause and pushing local leaders to take steps to make it a reality."

Sincerely,

K.C. Traver, President
Inland Empire Rail Transit Association
www.inlandrail.org

Response: Comments noted and suggestions will be considered for the next MTP update.

From: Rich Burnett [<mailto:rlburnett1@comcast.net>]
Sent: Sunday, December 18, 2011 1:32 PM
To: Staci Lehman
Subject: Emailing: SRTC 2012 MTP and TIP Comments

I left a copy of comments to the 2012 MTP and TIP at the SRTC office on Friday December 16th. After additional review I noted a significant directional error that I made in the fourth line in the last line paragraph of the first page of my comments. I erroneously wrote East where it should actually have stated West.

Attached are copies of my comments with corrections and copies of the attachments that I left at the STRC office on Friday. These documents should be used instead of those I left on Friday.

I apologize for any inconvenience or misunderstanding that this may have caused.

Thank you again,

Rich Burnett
218-1423

Comments to 2012 MTP and TIP

I agree that the NS Freeway should be the paramount regional transportation construction priority. Its completion or even partial completion for limited use would provide enormous benefits and relieve traffic pressure in multiple areas. Significant relief would occur in the Division and Market Corridors in the City of Spokane, the Argonne Corridor within the County and the Cities of Millwood and Spokane Valley, The Sullivan Road Corridor from Wellesley to I-90 and also the Bigelow Gulch - Forker Road route in the County and The City of Spokane Valley.

I also agree that Bigelow Gulch is due for improvements to address safety issues and needs an increase to its paved width beyond the current edge to edge width of pavement which is barely 24 feet throughout much of the route. The conclusion that the wisest allocation of funds and the most reasonable solution for the problems that exist on Bigelow Gulch is the transformation of the secondary rural arterial into a five lane highway with the edge to edge width of pavement proposed to be at least 76 feet or more is in need of additional careful consideration.

I recognize that some of the following observations may need to be evaluated in light of the SRTC policies and authority related to their involvement and power to influence the details of the design and scheduling of projects proposed by various agencies.

One detail I noted were possible syntax changes needed in the text following the fifth Whereas: on page iv of the MTP Document.

Following are several comments and observations related to accuracy of data presented in this document and the use of the data to fully evaluate the priorities and scheduling of projects. Many of the comments here are related to the Bigelow Gulch / Forker Road project as that is a project that I have followed for some time.

In reviewing some of the maps I noted that there were some errors in the designation of Freight Tonnage Class on some routes. The Maps in Section 2 - Existing Conditions which are labeled as Map 2.3, Map 2.3a and Map 2.3b all indicate that Bigelow Gulch West of Argonne is a T1 route with Freight Volumes greater than 10 Million Tons per Year. The only other routes in the county with the T1 classification are I-90 and some parts of Market Street mostly within the City of Spokane, and a portion of Argonne. Trent Avenue, Division, Highway 395 and Highway 195 are all classified as lower volume T2 Routes. The actual traffic volume on Bigelow gulch in this section is actually approximately 5 Million Tons Annually. This is only about half of the volume needed to be properly designated as a T1 Class. There is an accurate calculation attached with an erroneous designation indicating that this segment is classified as a T1 route. The traffic east of Argonne on Bigelow Gulch is approximately 65% of Traffic West of Argonne which would correspond to about 3.25 Million Tons Annually. This indicates that the proper classification of this segment is a T3 route. Detailed traffic data is available for an accurate calculation of Traffic volumes for the segment east of Argonne. I would be glad to assist staff in obtaining complete and accurate information in order to establish a proper designation of this segment that can be properly supported and reviewed for accuracy by others. Note the Freight Classification of Argonne north of Trent perhaps should also be verified.

The inclusion of any possibly erroneous information in these documents can affect the judgment and choices made by the SRTC board and its Committees. Inaccurate data can affect public perception and public opinion about the needs and priorities for the various proposed Road Projects. And finally, any errors in such reports that may find their way into funding applications at the State and Federal levels may have severe consequences. Others, not living in the

Spokane area, who may be making judgments about the priority and value of Spokane projects, may come to invalid conclusions.

Another set of information presented that I would like to discuss were the maps indicating the future conditions under No Build Scenarios. Again, referring to the Bigelow Gulch / Forker Road series of projects, only two segments of the corridor currently or are projected to exceed a volume to capacity ratio in excess of 75% during peak periods in any of the No Build scenarios for the years of 2015, 2025 or 2035. Those two areas are a short segment identified as Project 19 in the 2011-2015 project list and the segments of Forker Road to Wellesley identified as projects 9 and 15 in the 2016 to 2025 Projects. Perhaps the Forker Road sections which are not scheduled until the 2016 to 2025 period should be a higher priority than the other sections of Bigelow that have fewer congestion issues but are scheduled earlier. It would appear from the data presented, that this section is the portion in most need of immediate improvement. It currently has a Volume to Capacity ratio of 75 to 85% and portions projected to be as high as 95% by 2015. Note again that the No Build projections for volume to capacity measurements for all other segments of Bigelow Gulch would not exceed the 75% volume to capacity threshold during peak periods at all thru year 2035. Perhaps these sections should not be allocated funds prior the Forker Road sections.

There certainly are much less expensive alternatives that satisfy the safety and projected traffic needs on Bigelow Gulch other than building a new east/west highway with a larger footprint than Trent Avenue and which would run largely parallel and be located about two or three miles north of Trent. Additionally if such a large Highway is built it is sure to draw additional traffic and cause additional congestion in both the Argonne and Sullivan Corridors. About one third or more of the traffic on Bigelow Gulch West of Argonne also traverses Argonne with much of the remainder traversing Sullivan.

According to the 2008 MTP, some of the most congested intersections in the county are on Argonne Road. These include five instances of volume to capacity greater than 85%. They include Argonne and Wellesley at 105%, Argonne at Grace, 88%, Argonne at Euclid at 110%, Argonne at Upriver Drive at 95%, and Argonne at Trent 90%. This group includes 4 of only 17 intersections in the County with a volume to capacity ratio of at 95% or greater according to the 2008 MTP report. Almost all of the other intersections on Argonne to the freeway are also above the 75% volume to Capacity ratio. There seems to be little room for improvements to alleviate congestion in Millwood or anywhere along Argonne for that matter. Transforming Bigelow Gulch into to a four or five lane highway will funnel much more traffic to Argonne that will create significant additional congestion. All the ramifications of and alternatives to such a major construction project should be carefully considered in evaluating the most efficient use of scarce transportation construction funds.

More modest improvements to Bigelow Gulch with particular attention paid to adding shoulders and a center turn lane and perhaps elevating the priority of the Forker to Sullivan segments would seem to be a more prudent allocation of funding than what is presented in the current proposal. Some of the safety and perhaps even capacity issues could be temporarily addressed by speed limit adjustments until more appropriate improvements are implemented on Bigelow Gulch.

Thank you for your consideration,

Rich Burnett

Attached:

- Maps 2.3, 2.3a and 2.3b Indicating Tonnage Class
- Truck Route Volume Determination For Bigelow Gulch west of Argonne with supporting traffic counts
- Maps 2.8, 3.1, 3.2, and 3.3 showing base existing conditions and conditions for 2015, 2025 and 2035 No Build scenarios

Response: Comments noted. SRTC GIS staff are researching the discrepancy and will correct when more up-to-date information is received from the responsible jurisdiction.

A public comment open house was held at the SRTC offices on December 6th. The following comments were received at that meeting:

Charles Hansen – A rail line from downtown Spokane to Hillyard is showing on all of the maps. This rail line was removed years ago.

Response: The rail line originated from the Spokane County and WSDOT GIS database. SRTC GIS staff are investigating the discrepancy and, if appropriate, the rail line will be removed from the SRTC GIS database for all future maps.

Charles Hansen – Requested additional information about project #17 Spokane River Bridge on the Long Term project list.

Response: Additional details have been requested from Spokane County on the proposed project. Once received, the additional information will be provided to the requestor and included in the future MTP update.

A series of interagency consultation meetings were held during the development of the 2012 MTP Update. The meetings occurred on October 6th, 11th, 20th, November 10th and December 1st. Representatives from the Federal Highway Administration, Federal Transit Administration, Federal Environmental Protection Agency, Washington State Department of Transportation, Spokane Transit Authority and SRTC participated in the coordination meetings. As a result of the review of the draft document by the consultation meeting participants, the following revisions were made to the draft 2012 MTP Update document:

- Include no-build and build maps and financial plan summary tables in the Executive Summary.
- Create table in Section 4 Future Conditions that shows Vehicle Miles Travelled (VMT) and Vehicle Hours Travelled (VHT). Additional text was also added (clarification on growth % to be added to Section 5 as well):

In addition to V/C ratios a simple reporting of VMT and VHT between No-Build and Build networks can help identify how projects impact the transportation system. **Table 4.5** reports regional VMT and VHT conditions in the future analysis years as reported by the SRTC regional model. The VMT conditions trend upward in the Build conditions from the No-Build conditions in all analyses years. However, the VMT growth is modest ranging from 0.5% in 2015 to 3.7% in 2035. Conversely, the VHT trends are mixed but show significant improvement in reducing hours spent on the transportation network in Build conditions in 2025 and 2035; more than an 18% improvement. This is an indication that the Build

conditions while modestly increasing VMT are improving delay and congestion on the transportation system. This improvement in delay is also supported by the V/C results found in Table 4.4.

Table 4.5 Daily VMT and PM Peak VHT Results

Analysis Year	Daily VMT			PM Peak Hour VHT		
	No-Build	Build	% Change	No-Build	Build	% Change
2015	12,199,520	12,261,181	0.5	80,915	81,443	0.7
2025	13,864,299	14,146,811	2.0	105,707	86,350	-18.3
2035	15,594,396	16,170,088	3.7	147,991	121,150	-18.1

VHT reported in hours

As a result of the discussions by the SRTC Board regarding the Governor’s “Connecting Washington Task Force” and the development of a regional priority list, the projects not already listed in the MTP have been added to the unfunded or illustrative project list in Section 4 Table 4.8.

The Connecting Washington Task Force was formed to develop a 10-year investing and funding plan for the state’s transportation system. Within the framework being created by the Task Force, the state Regional Transportation Planning Organizations (RTPO’s) are working cooperatively to develop regional project priorities. Once completed, the projects will be available for viewing through a web based application provided by the Puget Sound Regional Council. It is anticipated that there will also be project priorities developed by the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) for state highway priorities and by the Washington State Transit Association (WSTA) for transit priorities. The intent of these efforts is to have this information available for consideration during the 2012 Legislature. Planning assumptions for the RTPO’s work includes the following:

- Target investments that benefit job creation and economic vitality.
- Base the development of projects on a 10-year, \$8 billion dollar funding package.
- Assume that either 25% (\$2 billion) or 50% (\$4 billion) of the \$8 billion funding package would be available for RTPO project priorities. This would translate to \$155 million and \$310 million available for the Spokane County region.
- RTPO’s will be reviewing, but will not be constrained by the previous top 20 project priority lists that were provided to the Washington State Transportation Commission (WSTC).

To be available for the 2012 Legislature, the SRTC Board approved this regional project priority list at the December 8, 2011 Board meeting. The Board held two special meetings on November 23, 2011 and November 30, 2011 to refine the project list. The project list identifies the region’s top two priorities, the North Spokane Corridor and Roadway Preservation and Maintenance. In addition, the list identifies full project costs and the respective allocation by mode, and the prioritized list based on a \$310 regional allocation. For the full project costs, an allocation of \$200 million for roadway preservation and maintenance has been included, which would assume a \$20 million annual investment for ten years.