US 2 Trestle Capacity Improvements and Westbound Trestle Replacement PEL Study

Executive Advisory Group, Meeting #2 Summary
Thursday, February 27, 2025, 2:00 p.m.
Microsoft Teams Meeting

Meeting Purpose
The Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) hosted the second meeting of the Executive Advisory Group (EAG) for the US 2 Trestle Capacity Improvements and Westbound Trestle Replacement Planning and Environmental Linkages (PEL) Study. The purpose of the meeting was to update the EAG on the Study progress, review the process to develop concepts and system alternatives, review information about tolling considerations, and to prepare the EAG for upcoming project milestones.

EAG attendees:

- Adam LeMieux, Port of Everett
- Ben Zarlingo, Everett City Council
- Deborah Bell, Snohomish County Council
- Glynda Steiner, Snohomish County Public Works, Transportation and Environmental Services
- Janene Bessent, legislative assistant to Rep. Mary Fosse, 38th Legislative District
- Jon Nehring, City of Marysville
- Ken Klein, Snohomish County Executive's Office
- Linda Redmon, City of Snohomish
- Megan Dunn, Snohomish County Council
- Ralph Rizzo, Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)
- Reema Griffith, Washington State Transportation Commission
- Ric Ilgenfritz, Community Transit
- Robert Endsley, City of Snohomish
- Russell Wright, City of Lake Stevens
- Tom Merrill, Snohomish City Council

WSDOT attendees:

- April Delchamps, WSDOT
- Brian Nielsen, WSDOT
- Cameron Kukes, WSDOT
- Curt Winningham, WSDOT
- Ed Barry, WSDOT
- Josh Shippy, WSDOT
- Kyengo Ndile, WSDOT
- Lisa Sakata, WSDOT
- Oteberry Kedelty, WSDOT
- Robin Mayhew, WSDOT
- Scott Davis, WSDOT
- Zoe Irish, WSDOT

Consultant team attendees:

- Anne Broache, WSP
- Ben Rodenbough, WSP
- Brent Baker, WSP
- Chris Wellander, WSP
- Jared Nakamoto, WSP
- Jennifer Rash, PRR
- Larissa King-Rawlins, WSP
- Michael Horntvedt, Parametrix
- Michelle Auster, PRR

Welcome and introductions
WSDOT welcomed attendees to the second EAG meeting with a safety moment, introductions and roll call, and agenda review.

Study refresh
OT Kedelty, WSDOT, reviewed the purpose of the PEL Study, legal requirements, the Study feedback loop and role of the EAG. The role of the EAG is to provide policy guidance and community representation through four meetings during the PEL Study.

PEL Study progress and updates
April Delchamps, WSDOT, recapped the first EAG meeting, reviewed community engagement milestones and shared a summary of survey results from the spring 2024 online open house, which focused on the draft NEPA Purpose and Need. Lisa Sakata, WSDOT, reviewed the revised draft NEPA Purpose and Need statements. She noted the purpose statement was simplified and clarified, emphasizing WSDOT's intent was to equitably serve communities rather than treat all transportation modes equally. She also explained the following Need statement changes:

- Multimodal Mobility Need statement: Few changes were made to the statement. The word "equitable" was removed because survey respondents found it confusing, interpreting it as a directive to treat all travel modes the same. To address this misunderstanding, adjustments were made to the purpose statement to clearly convey that "equity" refers to populations rather than transportation modes.
- Resilience Need statement: The earlier version of this statement was much shorter and focused solely on the westbound trestle. After gathering more data, the statement was expanded to include the entire US 2 trestle, covering both directions of travel. Additional needs were added to align with WSDOT's Strategic Plan, emphasizing seismic resilience, asset management, climate and natural hazard resilience, and operational resilience.

Lisa Sakata, WSDOT, noted that FHWA provided concurrence on the draft NEPA Purpose and Need statement through the Concurrence Point #2 memo in August 2024. She also noted the study team had drafted the Environmental Existing Conditions Report, which was provided to Resource Agency Committee (RAC) members for review and comment. The report summarizes a desktop review (using readily available information sources) of 16 different environmental topics within the PEL Study preliminary study area:

1. Earth (geology and soils)
2. Air quality
3. Greenhouse gas emissions[1]
4. Stormwater best management practice sites and retrofit priorities
5. Wetlands and other waters (including mitigation sites and navigable waters)
6. Chronic environmental deficiencies
7. Climate vulnerability[2]
8. Special flood hazard areas
9. Habitat connectivity

[1] At the time of this EAG presentation, greenhouse gas emissions was a section included in the Environmental Existing Conditions Report; however, the team has since been directed to remove it from the report.

[2] At the time of this EAG presentation, climate vulnerability was a section included in the Environmental Existing Conditions Report; however, the team has since been directed to remove it from the list.

10. Fish passage barriers
11. Threatened and endangered species (plants and wildlife)
12. Noise walls
13. Hazardous materials contamination sites
14. Publicly owned parks, recreational areas, and refuges
15. Cultural resources
16. Environmental Justice[3] (community profile)

Concept development and evaluation

Josh Shippy, WSDOT, reviewed the concept evaluation process. He reminded the EAG of the existing and future (2050) traffic outlook within the study area, including travel speeds and bottlenecks. This current study contains some assumptions with the previous US 2 study, also some differences including:

- No Build assumptions
- Considering the eastbound trestle with options for repair or replacement
- Additional active transportation concepts
- Deeper dive on transportation resiliency needs

He explained that the evaluation process involves developing multimodal improvement concepts for both directions of the trestle and its connections, along with separate active transportation concepts. Using 19 criteria based on the Purpose and Need, concepts underwent pre-screening (pass, neutral, or fail). The highest-scoring concepts were paired with compatible active transportation options for further qualitative evaluation (high, medium, low).

<u>West Interchange- Westbound (WB)</u>

The study team identified five westbound connection concepts at the west end that received above-average scores. All concepts include a two-lane ramp to I-5 southbound, an additional ramp into Everett, and compatibility with a three- or four-lane westbound trestle. Each concept also supports a potential transit priority path to downtown Everett via California, Hewitt, or Pacific Avenue. The California route aligns better with a north-side trestle HOV lane, while the Hewitt and Pacific routes are more compatible with a south-side trestle HOV lane.

<u>West Interchange- Eastbound (EB)</u>

Of the four eastbound connection concepts assessed for the west interchange, the study team identified only one that received an above-average score. This concept provides a one-lane off-ramp from NB I-5 which widens out into a 2-lane off to Pacific Ave, and a 2-lane ramp to US2 EB. The ramp to Pacific Ave includes an HOV lane that continues along Walnut St and ties into the on-ramp from Hewitt St to Eastbound US 2. A notable aspect of this is that transit from Pacific Ave, which provides connections to the future Everett Link Station, can also access this HOV lane, which would provide a transit priority route to the eastbound trestle and be compatible with a south side eastbound trestle HOV lane.

<u>Trestle – Westbound (WB)</u>

There were four westbound trestle concepts that received above average scores, all of which assumed a new trestle structure, three full-time travel lanes and standard shoulders, and the

[3] At the time of this EAG meeting, this section was titled "Environmental Justice." It has since been revised to Social and Community Resources to address recently rescinded federal executive orders.

potential for a full-time or peak-use shoulder HOV/transit lane on either the north or south side of trestle. One concept assumed peak shoulder use in addition to the 3 full-time lanes, making it four lanes during the peak period. Another concept assumed two lanes plus a barrier-separated reversible/local lane. All of the concepts are compatible with multiple active transportation concepts.

Trestle – Eastbound (EB)
The evaluation of eastbound trestle concepts identified four options with above-average scores, all of which assume a new structure with standard design width shoulders. One concept closely resembles the current configuration, featuring two full-time lanes with a peak shoulder use lane, but it incorporates a standard inside shoulder for improved safety and functionality. Three other concepts propose expanding to three full-time travel lanes, enhancing capacity and reliability. Another concept introduces peak shoulder use, either for high-occupancy vehicles (HOV) or general-purpose traffic, in conjunction with the three full-time lanes. A key assumption in the planning process is that the eastbound trestle replacement would follow the completion of the westbound trestle replacement.

East Interchange- Westbound (WB)
The evaluation of east end westbound connection concepts identified five options with above-average scores, each offering variations in how SR 204, 20th Street, and US 2 connections merge. All concepts include the option for a rebuilt two-lane 20th Street local bridge over Ebey Slough and are compatible with either a three- or four-lane westbound trestle. Additionally, three of the concepts align with a north side trestle HOV lane, while the remaining two are designed to accommodate a south side trestle HOV lane. These options aim to enhance connectivity and traffic flow while ensuring flexibility in future design considerations.

East Interchange- Eastbound (EB)
The evaluation of east end eastbound connection concepts identified two options with above-average scores, both assuming a two-lane ramp to SR 204 and compatibility with a two-, three-, or four-lane eastbound trestle. One of the concepts also includes a grade-separated connection from northbound SR 204 to Sunnyside, enhancing traffic flow and reducing potential congestion points. These options provide flexibility in design while supporting improved connectivity and capacity for future eastbound travel.

In summary, for the west interchange area, the study team looked at 14 concepts overall (both westbound and eastbound) and carried forward six that scored above average. For the trestle, the study team looked at 13 concepts and eight moved forward. And for the east end, the study team looked at 14 concepts and seven moved forward. After gathering input in Level 1, the concepts will be packaged into system alternatives that advance to Level 2 for more quantitative screening, which will ultimately identify alternatives for the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process. The team will also include a couple of “tolled” alternatives in our analysis.

Questions/Comments:
Deborah Bell, Snohomish County, asked a question in the chat: Do these concepts contemplate under deck bike/ped facilities?

- WSDOT answered yes, with the caveat that they are still determining the locations of those active transportation facilities.

Forming System-level Alternatives Development

Josh Shippy, WSDOT, gave a high-level overview of the process on developing Level 2 System Alternatives. He shared that the Level 1 screening focused on corridor concept components by area (west end, trestle, east end) and by direction. Based on the results, the highest-rated concepts will be analyzed for compatibility with each other across the three geographical areas. More traffic analysis tests will be conducted to confirm the operational viability of certain concepts and how they connect with others. This will help identify the best pairings and potential operational issues. Since tolling is not assumed as a given for this study, alternatives will be carried forward to reflect both tolled and non-tolled scenarios.

Tolling Considerations
Brent Baker, WSP, provided an overview of the statutory tolling policy that sets the statewide tolling framework, including the roles of the Legislature, Washington State Transportation Commission, and WSDOT in the process. He shared that the PEL study is evaluating toll alternatives, including both tolled and non-tolled system options, for the upcoming Level 2 evaluation. Alternatives with and without tolling will be carried forward, considering potential revenue and demand management implications. Similarly, the NEPA process would also carry both tolled and non-tolled alternatives forward if tolling authorization is not provided. He noted that a Funding & Finance Study conducted in 2018 determined that tolling would likely be necessary, and its findings remain relevant after a recent briefing with Senate staff. Additionally, the timing of tolling authorization may impact the overall study timeline.

Next Steps / Action Items
April provided an outlook for study progress and upcoming meetings. The study team expects to complete the PEL and begin the NEPA process in the next biennium (2025-2027). However, due to the current state funding freeze, there is some uncertainty about future work. She asked the EAG to consider how we can best work together to continue progress. In reviewing the planned PEL committee meetings and schedule, she noted that the next EAG meeting will take place after two additional Technical Working Group (TWG) meetings and another Resource Agency Committee meeting. The detailed Level 2 analysis will be conducted before these meetings. WSDOT can provide updates to the EAG as needed for those seeking more information. The study team is also working toward the next Study milestone, FHWA Concurrence Point 3, which is concurrence with the range of alternatives, and the more comprehensive PEL Study report. Additionally, there will be two major public engagement milestones: one in the summer to discuss alternatives and another in the fall or winter to present the draft PEL Study report for public comment.

Questions/Comments:
Ben Zarlingo, Everett City Council, asked if the study team could share all of the concepts to get a better idea of the breadth of work.

- WSDOT noted that the TWG Meeting 3 presentation included a review of all of the concepts and is available on the study website.
- Michael Horntvedt, Parametrix, asked what concepts have been resonating with the EAG so far.
    - Councilmember Zarlingo answered that he is still digesting the concepts and suggested presenting them in a more experiential way.
    - Michael responded in the chat: The current work is mostly at the concept level (smaller parts of each interchange). Once we have the system level analysis completed, we'll be able to help people to envision their trips with each alternative with much more detail.

Linda Redmon, City of Snohomish, asked in the chat: I am interested in accessing info about anticipated public transportation, including links to light rail, and how these changes are anticipated to accommodate additional use of public transportation. Do you have a link to info that was incorporated into this?

- WSDOT responded that Level 2 analysis will incorporate more analysis on transit. The study team is coordinating with Community Transit, Sound Transit, and Everett Transit to understand future transit routes and ridership levels.

Debroah Bell, Snohomish County, asked if major regional projects are being at looked at for the timelines and to see how they would work together.

- April answered that it is too early in the process to assess delivery timelines. They are working biennium to biennium and there is not yet a final concept or preferred alternative, so there are still too many unknowns now to be able to answer that question.

Ric Ilgenfritz, Community Transit, reflected on the distant future of the light rail coming to this area. He suggested consideration of the interim operating conditions for transit coming from the east end of the trestle.