

FREIGHT MOBILITY STRATEGIC INVESTMENT BOARD

MEETING MINUTES

March 21, 2025 • 9:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m. • Tacoma, WA

<https://tww.org/watch/?eventID=2025031055>

In Attendance

BOARD MEMBERS

Temple Lentz, Chair
Peter Bennett
Matthew Colvin
Al French
Erik Hansen
Johan Hellman
John McCarthy
Anne McEnerny-Ogle
Julie Meredith
Jon Snyder
Ben Wick
Cory Wright

Not Present:
Leonard Barnes
Aaron Hunt, Ex-officio

FMSIB STAFF

Brandy DeLange, Executive Director
Joy Dopita, Executive Assistant
Sally See, Executive Assistant
Fred Wenhardt, Planning Specialist

GUEST PRESENTERS

Parina Patel, Assistant Attorney General
Chris Herman, WA Public Ports Association
Axel Swanson, WA State Association of County Engineers
Jason Biggs, WSDOT Rail, Freight, and Ports Division
Steve Balaski, The Northwest Seaport Alliance
Jay Drye, WSDOT Local Programs Division
Adam Jackson and Robert Lochmiller, Spokane Valley Public Works

Meeting Convenes

Chair Lentz convened the meeting at 9:07 a.m. and requested Board members, FMSIB staff, and guests introduce themselves. Julie Meredith, Secretary of Transportation at WSDOT, and Jon Snyder, Environmental Protections representative, introduced themselves as new Board Members.

Parina Patel, Assistant Attorney General assigned to FMSIB, introduced herself and explained her role was to advise and provide guidance to the Board and ensure it complied with RCW law.

Public Comment

Chair Lentz asked if anyone would like to share public comment. No one stepped forward.

Approval of Meeting Minutes

Commissioner French moved to accept the Board meeting minutes for January 17, 2025.
Commissioner McCarthy seconded.

MOTION APPROVED

Washington State Association of Counties Update

Axel Swanson, Washington State Association of County Engineers Managing Director, gave an overview of the Washington State Association of County Engineers and presented on county transportation funding challenges, needs and legislative priorities. He emphasized that state laws applied to all 39 counties but to keep in perspective that the counties were diverse and didn't have the same resources and capacity.

Commissioner Wright spoke about how the Growth Management Act had challenges for counties with agricultural areas and stressed the importance of bridges when looking at arterials and freeways, which form a critical link to our state's export dependence.

Mr. Swanson highlighted that Washington State had the most publicly owned fish barriers and was working hard to inventory them so they could help with prioritization.

(See presentation: WSACE Freight Mobility Strategic Investment Board Presentation)

Washington Public Ports Association Update

Chris Herman, Deputy Director of the Washington Public Ports Association (WPPA), highlighted items from their legislative agenda and noted transportation was their top priority. He explained that to have an efficient, safe and well-maintained system adequate funding is needed. WPPA have been strong supporters of more sustained and transparent revenue for transportation and took a hard vote with their members to support things like the road usage charge.

Mr. Herman noted a challenge they've seen within the legislature was based on the change in political climate in Washington, DC. The state legislature was being very protective and tried to create back stops and counter what they saw as a rollback of federal regulations as it related to environmental policy. This would extend the time for permitting of projects, which

would also extend the timeframe for pre-construction activities for projects that resulted in higher costs.

A shore power bill, modeled after California's adoption, which would have mandated certain ports to adopt shore power within their marine terminals by 2028 had not advanced during session and was opposed by WPPA. Following California's model could give us peace of mind, but Washington does not have the same air emission quality concerns California does. California has a very large market and is attractive to international shipping. Washington State is not so we've had to create opportunities to bring cargo here and should be structuring these programs in a way that makes sense for our market and our economy.

Mr. Herman expanded on the public utility tax on trucking, rail, barge and pipelines which would ultimately raise the price of goods and services that use transportation services. The legislature expected they would raise about \$100 million a year by repeal of this specific tax preference.

Mr. Herman informed the Board that the update of the Marine Cargo Forecast was nearing completion, and the final report would be presented at the June Board meeting. He noted WPPA had contingency funding remaining and made a small adjustment to the study to expand the scope of the maritime economic impact analysis

Commissioner French inquired about WPPA opposing HB1786, which would have brought financial resources to WSDOT. *Mr. Herman* was not tracking the bill but agreed to speak with *Commissioner French* and listen to his concerns.

(See presentation: WPPA 2025 Legislative Priorities)

WSDOT Truck Parking Update

Jason Biggs, WSDOT Director of the Rail, Freight, and Ports Division, provided an overview of truck parking at the I-5 and Ft. Lewis weigh station with a concentration of the 30, 50 and 75 parking stall analysis. There was discussion on the stall design alternatives and cost comparisons between the three options. *Mr. Biggs* highlighted the value alternative as the 50-stall design because of the impacts and difference in cost but encouraged feedback from the Board.

Mayor McEnerny-Ogle mentioned that the City of Vancouver had an old visitor center that had been vacant for over 20 years for possible consideration of truck parking. While it might only hold about 10 to 15 semis, it contained a visitor center, restrooms, space and ramping, which had the potential to remove many of the semis that were parked within the neighborhood in the city. She urged WSDOT to explore this site for possible future truck parking and *Mr. Biggs* agreed to coordinate.

Jon Snyder asked if RAISE grants could be used as a possible source of funding and *Mr. Biggs* confirmed it was possible to apply for federal grants with multiple locations.

Mr. Hansen inquired if phases one and two were dependent on each other and whether funding for truck parking and the weigh station could be separated? For example, if \$9M was provided for the project, could you move forward with phase one without phase two needing to happen? Mr. Biggs informed Mr. Hansen he would research this inquiry and get back to him.

(See presentation: WSDOT Truck Parking I-5 Fort Lewis WS_FMSIB)

FMSIB Maritime Tour and Intermodal Presentation

Steve Balaski, Northwest Seaport Alliance Business Development Director, presented on the highlights and impacts of the Inland Rail Hub Initiative, one of the strategic initiatives at the Northwest Seaport Alliance. He began with an overview of the Northwest Seaport Alliance, which is a marine cargo operating partnership of the ports of Seattle and Tacoma formed in 2015.

Commissioner McCarthy questioned how things were going at Tri-Cities Intermodal as a follow up to the Board's tour from 2024. Mr. Balaski said he's been working with Ted Prince and Tri-Cities Intermodal, and they've gained traction in the last three to four months and were acquiring customers and expanding their scope of operations.

Peter Bennett asked if the Northwest Seaport Alliance had looked at combining the Columbia River barge system to a rail connection within the Northwest Seaport Alliance since there's good infrastructure and it would seem like a good opportunity to get cargo on rail to barge helping the Eastern Washington, Oregon and Idaho areas. Mr. Balaski replied that it hadn't been looked at in this initiative but is something that should be explored.

(See presentation: Tour NWSA Inland Hub Update FMSIB 3.21.25)

Inland Intermodal Feasibility Study

Fred Wenhardt, FMSIB Transportation Planner, outlined the Inland Intermodal Feasibility Study and discussed his research to date and next steps.

Director DeLange reminded the Board that due to SHB 1084 and the need to shift resources, this study was put on temporary pause and since funding may not be reappropriated, inquired as to what could or should be applied in terms of policy in the Six-Year Investment Program. She added that if reappropriation we're successful, FMSIB would research obtaining consultants for further development but noted the dire funding situation in Olympia and would rather focus on what to deliver for the Board. Operating under the assumption of no funding she still proposed implementing the Six-Year Investment Program.

Peter Bennett opined that this was an important issue and FMSIB's role was determining challenges the ports and truckers face and how to improve them and make this work. He suggested the study look at port tariffs and pricing and how we could make it more advantageous for this to succeed. He reminded the Board, as taxpayers we're subsidizing the

ports, we're not subsidizing to add trucks to roads and have more congestion in the port areas and FMSIB's role, whether we receive funding, was to work with the ports to ensure truckers weren't being affected.

Mayor McEnerny-Ogle expressed that she's learned this legislature is not interested in new needs but focused on protecting what we have by retrofitting or enhancing current infrastructure. To avoid adding to the deficit it's important to look at the ports that have the infrastructure, whether it's rail, barge, truck, and how to make that stronger and more efficient.

Johan Hellman suggested that if we're interested in optimal efficiency, we need to get the train to the ship as efficient as we can but that isn't always possible. Trucks give us an incredible amount of resiliency and flexibility because it is the most efficient method to move products quickly in smaller volumes and understanding the unique role of each mode and the benefits they provide is important, especially in the Pacific Northwest, the most trade dependent state of the nation.

(See presentation: Inland Intermodal Feasibility Study Outline)

Six-Year Investment Survey Overview and Update

Fred Wenhardt provided an overview of the Six-Year Investment Program and survey staff have developed to further improve outreach and analysis of the application process. He explained that over the last several months, staff met with multiple project applicants to gather valuable feedback about their experience with the application process, which resulted in a brief survey for applicants. The survey looked to assess key parts of the application process by asking applicants about application accessibility, challenges with the application process, additional funding requests for their application besides FMSIB, and the outcomes of their application even if it was not the desired result. The survey will be distributed in May and open for two weeks with results to be compiled by staff.

Director DeLange explained that this is the first step in refining data that staff would review to put forth recommendations for the Committee to consider when updating the Six-Year Investment Program plan.

The Board discussed the survey questions and how to refine questions to ensure all stakeholders were represented. It was suggested to reach out to people that didn't apply and to clarify the definition of strategic freight corridors.

(See presentation: Six Year Program Applicant Survey Questions)

FMSIB Capital Budget Report

Jay Drye, WSDOT Director Local Programs, addressed the FMSIB Capital Budget Spreadsheet included in the Board packet. He addressed the current status for projects that had been awarded during previous legislative sessions.

Director DeLange explained that Mr. Wenhardt and Mr. Drye were working together to provide more detail for projects at Board meetings. Mr. Wenhardt is working with project partners to obtain information and timelines and will be providing status photos and breakdowns of each project ongoing.

NOTE: Mayor McEnerny-Ogle departed at approximately 12:00 p.m.

(See presentation: Capital Budget Spreadsheet, Project Updates -FMSIB 2023-25_March 2025 Report)

Spokane Valley Project Update

Adam Jackson and Rob Lochmiller, Engineering Managers for Spokane Valley Public Works, addressed the update to the South Barker Road Project in Spokane Valley. This project was previously awarded by the legislature through FMSIB.

Director DeLange explained that there has been a lack of clarity from FMSIB and Local Programs on maneuverability on this project. There have been a number of projects, not just this one, that you all have made decisions on but unfortunately, those decisions were not fully captured. She asked for endorsement from the Board on the information presented by Spokane Valley Public Works, which didn't deviate from the decisions they previously made so the information could be transmitted to Local Programs in a memorialized way.

Mr. Drye explained the importance of maintaining alignment between a project's original intent, scope, and what is ultimately proposed or funded. He noted that discrepancies between the planned project (from point A to B) and what was submitted could raise concerns. When only part of a corridor or project is being worked on, it's important to ensure that was the original intent and when a project element doesn't match the official scope, it raises flags and prompts a review to confirm if it aligns with the original goals.

There was discussion amongst the Board regarding benefits of the smaller segment and it was noted that the city is continuing to provide incremental improvement along the corridor and nothing had changed.

Erik Hansen moved to approve the South Barker Road Project is within scope. Peter Bennett seconded.

Councilmember Wick and Jon Snyder abstained.

MOTION APPROVED

NOTE: Motion was made; Commissioner McCarthy departed at 12:50 p.m. during discussion.

(See presentation: Spokane Valley Public Works S. Barker Corridor Update)

Executive Director Report & Operational Budget

Director DeLange reviewed the attached FMSIB Operating Budget. She also noted that staff was working to create benchmarks for the Six-Year Investment Program and getting prepped

for the first committee meeting of the program. The focus has been on developing recommendations for the project criteria and updates to the application as well as outreach and engagement with other stakeholders across the state. Staff have also been incorporating the past work FMSIB has done related to overburdened communities and integrating that further into the Six-Year Investment Program.

Director DeLange reminded the Board that the transportation budget would be released on Monday, and we would be eagerly awaiting the determination on funding of the Six-Year Investment Program and truck parking. She also highlighted that the operating budget was in good shape and cost savings by moving into a state building and the reduction in overlap of salaries would be beneficial.

(See Operating Budget spreadsheet)

Committee Assignments

Chair Lentz explained that according to our bylaws, the Chair selects members of standing committees with Board approval and that FMSIB has two standing committees, the Executive Committee and the Six-Year Investment Program Committee.

The Six-Year Investment Program Committee was tasked with examining the criteria of the program, start vetting process of projects that come in from recommendations and give guidance to staff on the work of creating the Six-Year Investment Program. The initial composition is representation from all public sectors on the board such as cities, counties and ports as well as private sector stakeholders such as rail, trucking and environmental. Chair Lentz proposed the following appointments:

- Johan Hellman, Chair
- Matthew Colvin, Trucking
- Leonard Barnes, Ports
- Mayor McEnery-Ogle, Cities
- Commissioner Wright, Counties
- Jon Snyder, Environmental

For public sector alternates Chair Lentz is hopeful that all Board members would be willing to serve as alternates. For private sector, Chair Lentz and Peter Bennett will serve as alternates. As new Board members are appointed, we'll have the ability to potentially increase the size and composition of the committee.

The Executive Committee, formerly the Administrative Committee, is standing and acts as the executive committee to the board, helping with administrative matters as needed. The composition is largely unchanged except for a replacement for Art Swannack with Councilmember Wick. The proposed membership:

- Temple Lentz, Chair
- Leonard Barnes

- Eric Hansen
- Councilmember Wick
- Commissioner McCarthy

Peter Bennett moved to accept committee assignment recommendations as set by Chair Lentz. *Jon Snyder* seconded.

MOTION APPROVED

Next FMSIB Board Meeting

Peter Bennett moved to affirm the next FMSIB Workshop and Board meeting would be held June 12 and 13, 2025 in Wenatchee, Washington. *Councilmember Wick* seconded.

MOTION APPROVED

Meeting Adjourned

Chair Lentz adjourned the meeting at 1:00 p.m.

Summary of Board Motions:

- 1) Motion to accept Board meeting minutes from January 17, 2025. Motion Carried. (Page 2)
- 2) Motion to approve the South Barker Road Project is within scope. Motion Carried. (Page 6)
- 3) Motion to accept FMSIB committee assignments as set out by Chair Lentz. Motion Carried. (Page 8)
- 4) Affirmation of next FMSIB Workshop and Board meeting June 12 and 13, 2025, in Wenatchee, Washington. Motion Carried. (Page 8)

Temple Lentz
Board Chair

Attest: Brandy DeLange
Executive Director