

# FREIGHT MOBILITY STRATEGIC INVESTMENT BOARD

## SIX-YEAR INVESTMENT PROGRAM COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

May 5, 2025 • 10:00am – 11:30am • Microsoft Teams

### Attendance

#### COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Johan Hellman, Chair  
John McCarthy  
Jon Snyder  
Cory Wright

*Alternate:*  
Ben Wick

*Not Present:*  
Matthew Colvin  
Anne McEnerny-Ogle

Jason Biggs, Ex-Officio  
Jaye Drye, Ex-Officio

#### FMSIB STAFF

Brandy DeLange, Executive Director  
Fred Wenhardt, Transportation Planning Specialist

#### GUESTS

Jason Beloso, WSDOT  
Eric ffitich, WPPA  
Chris Herman, WPPA

### Meeting Convenes

*Chair Hellman* convened the second meeting of the Six-Year Investment Program Committee at 10:01am noting there were five voting committee members present.

### Six-Year Investment Program Application Criteria

*Director DeLange* highlighted that the scoring criteria was updated based off the feedback received from the committee in the first meeting. The Statewide Freight Importance category was elevated, and the overall point distribution was readjusted so that it better matched the feedback provided. She reminded the committee that the scoring system is flexible, and the goal was to improve project selection criteria, especially in areas such as freight importance, overburdened communities, and economic development.

*Mr. Wenhardt* provided a high-level summary of key changes to the scoring system:

- Point Restructuring – Per the direction of the committee, to consider and weigh Statewide Freight Importance more heavily, the category was increased to 10 points. In addition, Funding and Overburdened Communities were the next most heavily weighed at 8 points each. This change balanced the requirements of RCW 47.06A as well as emphasized the program’s desire to recommend funding for projects not only with high strategic value, but with high readiness and positive impacts on overburdened communities. The number of points under Project Readiness and Economic Development were also lowered.
- Strategic Freight Importance – In line with the point change, this category was modified to include 5 points for volume, and an additional 5 points for Other Strategic Benefit; an applicant can earn points by demonstrating mobility, preservation, stewardship, safety, system resiliency, tonnage, or an

additional factor that is not listed. This update was based on feedback from our port partners and should allow project applicants a greater opportunity to demonstrate strategic benefits beyond truck and roadway-based projects (i.e., rail and waterway-based projects), which focused heavily on volume and tonnage.

*Mr. Snyder* expressed satisfaction that previous input especially around freight importance and overburdened communities was well-incorporated. He raised questions about defining megaprojects and how applicants might align with them and expressed concerns about applicants overstating project connections to megaprojects for better scoring.

*Councilman Wick* asked for clarification on the overlap of categories for Statewide Freight Importance and Economic Development and it was explained that the scoring system is designed to allow for overlap while still capturing different value aspects.

*Director DeLange* raised questions about the Board's intentions regarding funding mega projects, such as the Interstate Bridge Replacement or Gateway projects, given recent budget challenges. She asked for clarification on what return on investment such funding might bring for the Board. She also emphasized the importance of maintaining scoring points for overburdened communities due to reporting obligations tied to the Heal Act, as required in the latest budget cycle.

*Commissioner McCarthy* clarified that his use of "mega project" refers to high-tonnage freight corridors (e.g., truck parking near JBLM) rather than massive multi-agency undertakings like the Interstate Bridge Replacement. He expressed concern that current scoring did not differentiate enough between projects with vastly different freight volumes and suggested a wider scoring range. On overburdened communities, he voiced concern about the definition and consistency in scoring impacts, questioning how to appropriately weigh these elements.

*Director DeLange* acknowledged Commissioner McCarthy's input, noting the need to balance scoring for compliance and effectiveness, and referenced tools and ongoing studies to refine definitions and data points.

*Chair Hellman* emphasized that scoring is just one part of the overall project selection process and stressed the need to consider biases and intangibles and highlighted the role of Board discussion in contextualizing the scores. He asked for clarification on the process of scoring and determining the FMSIB list of projects.

*Director DeLange* outlined the selection process:

- A call for projects at the beginning of 2026
- Applications must meet clear eligibility criteria (e.g., being on a strategic freight corridor)
- Projects are preliminarily scored by staff (Director DeLange and Mr. Wenhardt)
- The Board reviews the scored list, providing checks and feedback
- Continuous validation ensures alignment with the Six-Year Investment Program

*Mr. Wenhardt* added that while scoring is crucial, it's not absolute. He gave the example of the Port of Benton project that scored well but had a poorly written application. He stressed the importance of applicants clearly articulating how their projects impact overburdened communities.

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## **Six-Year Investment Program Application Criteria Stress Test**

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*Mr. Wenhardt* presented a "stress test" example using the Interstate Bridge Replacement (IBR) as a mega project and explained how they selected comparative projects based on either geographic proximity or cost similarity:

- Compared to previous projects like the City of Vancouver Fruit Valley and City of Tacoma Fishing Wars Memorial Bridge, the IBR scored 31 out of 35 under new criteria.

- It rated highly for strategic importance, readiness, and economic impact, though it lacked full funding.
- The project showed extensive engagement with overburdened communities.

*Mr. Snyder* asked whether there is a formal grant manual that defines mega projects, and the scoring mechanism tied to them.

*Director DeLange* confirmed there is no existing definition within FMSIB's framework and clarified that historically, FMSIB hasn't funded traditional mega projects. She noted the Board could decide to pursue this direction but cautioned about the limited budget (~\$30M/biennium), and the importance of maintaining regional diversity and project feasibility.

*Councilman Wick* inquired as to whether different project types (e.g., preservation vs. grade separation) will still be scored in separate categories or if they now compete under a unified system.

*Mr. Wenhardt* explained the new system doesn't formally distinguish by project type in the scoring itself. Instead, a unified score helps rank projects, and then decision-makers can apply percentage targets (e.g., 25% preservation, 30% safety) to select a mix of projects.

*Commissioner McCarthy* supported the idea that scoring should be universal, but decisions could still be guided by project-type targets and that no applicant should gain an advantage just by choosing the "right silo."

*Mr. Wenhardt* continued to walk through a comparison of seven projects: three approved (city, county, port) and four non-approved (city, county, ports), focused on how they scored under original vs. updated criteria:

#### Approved Projects:

- City of Fife – Tacoma Road Interchange: High scoring both before and after revisions; confirmed system alignment with impactful freight projects.
- Spokane County – Argonne Road: Moderate increase in score with updated metrics; suggests strong application and good freight value.
- Port of Klickitat: Scored better under new metrics despite lower original score; small-scale but effective project.

#### Non-Approved Projects:

- City of Warden – Truck Parking Facility: Scored lower originally; did better under new system but lacked strong economic development case.
- Jefferson County – Bridge Replacement: Scored low originally; improved with more rigorous scoring, but lost points for under-addressing overburdened communities and safety impacts.
- Port of Benton: Had good freight metrics but a weak application; especially poor in addressing overburdened community needs.
- Port of Anacortes: Scored significantly higher with updated metrics due to thoughtful design, good community engagement, and strategic corridor value.

Most projects saw higher total scores with the new criteria, but relative positions shifted depending on strengths in environmental, safety, and community engagement factors.

*Commissioner Wright* emphasized the need for a clear group understanding of mega projects before presenting to the Board, warned that one large project could absorb most available funding, potentially at the expense of smaller yet significant local projects and highlighted the need for a balance between strategic statewide impacts and local/regional contributions or funding efforts.

*Councilman Wick* suggested discussing scoring "intangibles" like regional distribution and non-quantifiable factors in future meetings.

*Mr. Drye* warned against using the term “mega project” loosely and informed the committee that within WSDOT, it typically refers to projects over \$100 million. He recommended finding alternative terminology for high-impact but smaller-cost projects and emphasized recognizing large projects, like the Columbia River crossing, as important without implying FMSIB must fund them.

*Director DeLange* concluded the meeting by reminding the Committee that the updated scoring criteria would be presented to the full Board at the June workshop and board meeting and that the outcomes of these meetings will inform changes to Washington Administrative Code (WAC). She noted the current WACs are outdated (some haven’t been updated since 1999) and needed to be aligned with the Six-Year Investment Program and recommended not making WAC language too specific to avoid the need for frequent updates. The target date for WAC adoption is the November Board meeting.

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### **Next Six-Year Investment Program Committee Meetings**

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The next Six-Year Investment Program Committee meeting is scheduled for May 19, 2025, from 1:00pm to 2:00pm.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:37pm.