Summary Notes

Pierce County
Transportation Advisory Commission (TAC)
Thursday, May 26, 2022
9:00AM to 11:02AM

Tacoma Mall Plaza
2702 South 42\textsuperscript{nd} Street
Tacoma, WA 98409
Room 210

Call to Order: 9:01AM

Roll Call: 9:01AM

Voting Members: Deryl McCarty, Paul Lubbesmeyer, Shelly Schlumpf, Jessie Gamble, Dale Maris, Larry Leveen, Lindsey Sehmel, Brian Devereux, Lora Butterfield. There is a quorum.

Absent: Tom Pierson, Steve Gordon, Tom Walrath, Jr.

Non-Voting Members: Hugh Taylor, Rob Allen, Diane Evans.

Pierce County PPW Staff: Melissa McFadden, Rory Grindley, Jesse Hamashima, Gary Hendricks, Hilda O’Crotty, Neil Quisenberry, Mason Struna, Shawn Phelps.

Pierce County Non PPW Staff: Councilmember Morell, Councilmember Cruver, Brianne Blackburn (Parks & Recreation).

Other: Maxine Herbert-Hill (SR-162 Community Group), Elvin Lerew (SR-162 Community Group), Raichle Dunkeld (Walk & Roll Pierce County), Tracy Oster (Walk & Roll Pierce County), Paul Marquardt (Bethel School District).

Approval of Agenda: Chair Schlumpf.

Councilmember Comments: Councilmember Cruver reported that she has nothing new to report regarding transportation.

Councilmember Morell reported that they will be discussing the Transportation Benefit District (TBD) and looking at funding options at the next EIDC meeting.

Safe Routes to School: The Chair stated that the TAC has learned that Safe Routes to Schools has their own bucket of money. There are four school districts in unincorporated Pierce County participating in Safe Routes to School: Bethel, Franklin Pierce, Puyallup, and Peninsula. Grants are available with federal money coming in.

Staff noted that Pierce County works with school districts in the Urban areas on safe routes to schools. Pierce County does not work with schools in rural areas at this time because the County does not typically add sidewalks in rural areas.

It was noted that Safe Routes to Schools money comes from the State and the school district and/or County matches the grant. Every school statewide is eligible for the grants, which makes it a very competitive process.

Bethel School District – SRTS (Presented by Paul Marquardt, Bethel School District): Bethel School District is in the top 15 largest school districts in Washington state with 21,593 students. There are 29 schools total with 28 being in unincorporated Pierce County and 1 in the City of Roy. There are 18 elementary schools, 6 middle schools, and 3 high schools as well as an alternative high school, a virtual academy, and the Pierce County Skills Center. The Pierce County Skills Center is in a location with very limited transportation options.

Bethel has a bus fleet of 227 busses: 116 general education busses and 101 special education busses. Of the 101 busses, 86 are Type A (van chassis) and 15 are mid-size busses. Sixteen percent of the busses are low emissions propane busses. Busses are driven 10,000+ miles each day.

Of the 29 schools, 12 have school zone flashing beacons. There are no beacons on 176 Street East. Bethel spent $50,000 for flashing beacons.

Nine percent of Bethel schools have safe walking routes. Bethel has to bus 180 kids who are located within 3 blocks of schools that do not have safe routes/sidewalks.
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Bethel has had one Safe Routes to Schools project funded. This project is located on the north side of 168 Street (SLHS) from B Street to 13 Avenue Court. Construction is to begin in 2025. This project will provide sidewalks into the center of Spanaway along Pacific Highway. The County submitted an application in 2022 for the south side of 168 Street (SLHS) from B Street to 13 Avenue Court. The School District also applied for 2 other projects in 2022: 78 Avenue and 172 Street.

Staff asked Paul Marquardt how many students were currently walking to and from school. He noted maybe 70 to 80 students.

The Chair asked about ancillary traffic impacts. Where does it occur, and will it change if more students walk?

Paul replied that he would hope so. Currently, they have a very high number of parents dropping off and picking up students due to Covid. This was causing issues on the main streets. The schools have had to change drop off queues.

Congestion last 45 minutes prior to school starting secondary to parents arriving early and waiting. Congestion last approximately 15 minutes after school.

A board member stated that paved trails might be a better option especially with the cost difference between sidewalk and paved trail costs.

Staff noted that County Road funds can only fund projects in the road and right of way. There are limitations on road funds. Road funds can only be used in transportation projects, not recreational projects.

Brian Devereux noted that Safe Routes to School applications close in June. Grant applications are due this week.

Paul Marquardt noted that Bethel is actively going after any funding sources.

It was also stated that Pierce Transit is working on post Covid recovery. There will not be a Pierce Transit route going to the Pierce County Skills Center until approximately 2030 and that is if voters approve.

**Puyallup School District Presentation (Presented by Brian Devereux):** The Puyallup School District formed in 1854 and was the third district formed in the State. It is the seventh largest enrolled district in the State with approximately 22,450 students. The district unenrolled approximately 1000 students secondary to Covid; however, numbers of students are starting to increase. Sixty-seven percent of enrollment resides in unincorporated Pierce County with a large part in the South Hill area. Out of 33 schools, 17 are in unincorporated Pierce County.

The district is one of the largest employers in Pierce County employing approximately 3,580 certificated, classified, and substitute personnel. Currently, the District does not have enough staff and needs teachers. The new norm seems to be the emergency plan.

Puyallup School District has 98 large and 70 small busses as well as 100+ support vehicles. Prior to Covid, busses drove 8,027 miles per day for an approximate total of 1,444,860 miles per year. Approximately 53 percent of students are assigned to ride a bus and approximately 36 percent of students ride the bus. They have 108 bus drivers and 12 substitute bus drivers. Puyallup has 30 less bus drivers than pre-Covid. They have had to suspend certain runs for a portion of the 2021/2022 school year. Some runs were 2+ hours late for pick up/drop off.

The Puyallup School District has 19 major projects in the Pierce County Safe Routes to Schools Master Plan. The Washington State Transportation 2010 grant was unsuccessful. Puyallup had assistance from the County with the 2016 Safe Routes to School grant process; however, it was unsuccessful because it didn’t meet certain criteria. Two-thirds to three-fourths of applications are not approved. The Puyallup School District has yet to receive a Safe Routes to Schools grant.

Draft walk to school plans for Hunt Elementary and Carson Elementary were presented. The district looks at the speed of the road, age of children, etc., when developing the plans. Sidewalks in corridors are needed. Although Carson Elementary has sidewalks, there are still safety needs such as Rapid Rectangular Flashing Beacons (RFBs).
Currently, Puyallup uses two types of school speed zone signs: “When Children are Present” and “When Flashing” with beacons. The district has a memorandum of understanding with Edgewood and Puyallup where the Cities take ownership of hardware and maintenance, and the district maintains schedules of flashing beacons with software and maintains sign communication. The district takes full responsibility of beacons in Pierce County. “When Children are Present” signs are hard for law enforcement to enforce.

**Discussion:** The Chair asked about the cost of flashing beacons. Staff noted that RRFBs cost around $150,000 to $200,000 for a single installation. The beacons are usually solar.

A board member asked if the Bethel School District can put their needs for Safe Routes to Schools to the taxpayers for a vote. Paul Marquadt stated that asking taxpayers to approve is very unlikely to happen. There needs to be a super majority (60%) and your asking taxpayers to vote for their kids to walk to school instead of riding a bus.

**Approval of April’s Meeting Summary:** Motion to approve. 1st Larry Leveen. 2nd Deryl McCarty. No opposition. Summary notes approved as printed.

**Funding for Active Transportation:** Moved to next meeting.

**June’s Meeting:** Cancelled.

**Next Meeting:** July 28 from 9:00AM to 11:00AM. This meeting to include a Parks & Recreation presentation to discuss Parks’ projects, east to west connections, and how projects have been funded.

**Action Items:** The Chair will reach out and schedule presentations to include the educational process on Comp Plan, PSRC to talk about fund distribution as well as annual reports from the Sheriff’s Department, JBLM, and Accessible Communities Advisory Committee. Would also like to discuss TBD and funding for TBD.

**Public Comment:** Elvin Lerew commented on the huge cultural shift in parents driving kids to school. He stated that in Orting there is a paved trail, and there are lots of kids and people walking and biking to school and home. Parents need to know their kids are safe. He feels trails are better than sidewalks.

Deryl McCarty noted that the cultural shift might change again with the increase in gas prices. He stated that we have a thing for developments. We broke out Council districts for TIF. TIF money is used partially for transportation as well as parks. We need to add a little of this fee for schools.

Larry Leveen stated that he put the MSRC link in chat. He noted that this is a great site for every TAC member and planning commission member. He reported that he appreciates the school districts presentation. He also noted that we don’t want standalone projects.

Staff noted that in the past five years construction projects are completed with the Complete Streets concept.

**Motion to Adjourn:** Adjourned at 11:02 AM.