



memo portland

To Glenn Miles, SRTC
From Jay Renkens, MIG
Re **Draft Visioning Roundtable Summary Memo**
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INTRODUCTION

The Spokane Transportation Vision Project will address the role and relationship of all modes of transportation in the region. Visioning roundtable discussions help define the characteristics and needs of these modes through community engagement that is targeted to groups of users and more focused on specific topics of interest. The roundtable discussions targeted community and business leaders for each discussion topic, but were open to the public. The Visioning Process Team (VPT) identified the roundtable discussion topics as well as key stakeholders that would provide the greatest contribution to the meetings. Transportation topics and groups that were targeted included: senior citizens, kids/parents/families, transit, freight, economic development, bicycle/pedestrian, and real estate/development/construction.

The visioning roundtable discussions are just one of many types of public outreach being used during this planning process. Community workshops, stakeholder interviews, intercept events, focus groups, and several VPT meetings are scheduled throughout the process. A project web portal and social media tools, including facebook and twitter, are being used to reach additional members of the community.

This memo presents a summary of key findings and an overview of each discussion. Following the overview and key findings, agendas and graphic documentation of each meeting is available to provide more detail about the discussions and topics covered.

Roundtable Overview

The visioning roundtable discussions occurred between June and August 2010 and followed a common agenda. The meetings generally lasted two hours, beginning with introductions and an agenda overview. After introductions, the MIG Team presented a project overview including key facts and findings about regional transportation and information about the visioning process and project timeline. The majority of the roundtable meetings centered on responses to key questions that generated feedback from participants. All roundtable meetings included a discussion about the emerging transportation vision.

The planning team provided comment cards for participants and recorded comments on a wall graphic towards the front of the meeting space. The roundtables concluded with a summary of the meeting and an overview of next steps in the planning process.

KEY THEMES

The seven visioning roundtable discussions uncovered valuable information critical to building the regional transportation vision. Although each roundtable had a specific focus, there were several key themes that surfaced at multiple meetings. These are presented below in no particular order.

- *Educated and informed public.* Education is an important element of the regional system and should be increased to target non-transit users, promote safety among all transportation modes and provide information about new plans, projects and programs.
- *A transportation hub.* The Spokane region has the potential to become a transportation hub with air freight and cargo, trucking and rail managed through a potential port district. The region can increase manufacturing opportunities to balance the ratio of imports and exports.
- *Connectivity to centers and corridors.* New projects will fill in gaps in the existing network to create complete neighborhoods and connected centers and corridors. Expanded transit lines, bike facilities and sidewalks will help improve connections.
- *Integrated land use and transportation.* There is a strong interconnection between land use and transportation. Transportation decisions should consider impacts to land uses and vice versa.
- *Infrastructure needs.* New growth should fund its share of transportation improvements and sufficient infrastructure should be available to provide transportation choice.
- *Development incentives.* Incentives should be available to encourage transit-oriented development with programs to promote desired conditions.
- *Imbalanced tax structure.* The existing state tax structure sometimes poses a challenge to economic growth. New businesses looking to locate to the area are often lured away to Idaho.
- *Preserving regional assets.* The Spokane region has excellent access to the outdoors, natural and scenic beauty, and is a safe, family friendly and affordable community. New growth and development should serve to build on these assets and preserve regional values.
- *Increasing air freight and cargo.* Air freight and cargo should be encouraged and expanded to improve the capacity of the transportation system.

- *Transportation choice and freedom.* Residents feel strongly about having options to get around. The transportation system should consider the aging population and promote different transportation modes.
- *Funding and partnerships.* New and existing funding resources should be built and expanded to create a healthy and sustainable transportation system.
- *Thinking locally, regionally and globally.* The regional transportation system will serve local and regional needs, while improving connections internationally.

ROUNDTABLE SUMMARY

The visioning roundtables generated feedback concerning a range of opportunities and challenges to the region. A summary of each roundtable meeting is provided below. The graphic images attached towards the end of the document provide a more detailed overview of discussion that surfaced during the meetings.

Economic Development

The economic development roundtable was held on June 30, 2010, from 9-11 a.m. at Center Place in Spokane Valley. The discussion generally centered on assets, opportunities, challenges and goals.

- *Assets.* Meeting participants identified many reasons the Spokane region is a great place. These include the smaller size of its cities and communities, a family friendly atmosphere and access to nature and the outdoors. Short trips to local destinations were also identified as an important asset. Participants felt strongly about their independence, the entrepreneurial spirit that exists, and the rugged individualism that defines the region.
- *Opportunities.* Participants indicated regional growth occurring along corridors east of Spokane, and along a north and south corridor. There was discussion about a shift of housing from suburban areas to urban areas in the region. Participants indicated that this is largely due to the ease of mobility. Participants identified a need to retain an educated work force and expand on healthcare education. Identified growth areas included encouraging entrepreneurship and manufacturing and promoting Spokane as a hub for trade opportunities with Canadian trading partners. Based on the meeting, alternative energy should be expanded, and the transportation system should connect the region with transportation corridors.
- *Challenges.* Meeting participants felt that the State of Washington is trade deficient and that the cost to ship goods is the biggest barrier. Meeting participants also identified a shortage of truckers, and the need to encourage a new model of trucking to create more hubs and shorter trips. Other identified trends included the reliance on air parcel instead of air cargo.

- *Goals.* Goals identified during the meeting included a branding and messaging effort that integrates economic development, transportation and land use. Participants felt strongly about promoting education and balancing the import/export ratio in the region. Participants voiced a concern of keeping money in Spokane and preventing leakages into Idaho. Participants also indicated a goal to increase the region's role internationally.

Real Estate/Construction/Development

The real estate/construction/development roundtable was held on July 14th, 2010, from 10 a.m. to Noon at the Center Place in Spokane Valley. The meeting focused on challenges, assets, issues and opportunities.

- *Challenges.* Meeting participants identified costs, a lack of incentives and development codes as challenges. Specifically, development codes do not support development projects that serve to promote a multi-modal transportation network. During the meeting, participants also identified the lack of coordination between land use and transportation as a challenge. In addition, infrastructure needs in the region are comprehensive in scale.
- *Assets, issues and opportunities.* Participants indicated that single occupant vehicle (SOV) goals are unrealistic but possible if development encourages appropriate development such as multi-family housing along transit corridors. Participants noted the need to provide services to spur downtown development, and tying land use with transportation, especially when assigning costs to new growth. Opportunities include encouraging the use of public transit and the success of the Downtown Spokane Partnership to negotiate retailers into downtown.

Freight

The freight roundtable was held on July 14th, 2010 from 1-3 p.m. at Center Place in Spokane Valley. The freight roundtable centered on challenges and opportunities.

- *Challenges.* Participants noted the number of attractive amenities that lure residents and businesses to the region, but that high energy costs for manufacturing are an issue. There is capacity for investment but many projects are not ready for construction, and there are a number of opportunities surrounding skilled labor. The cost, speed and size of the transportation system are all major issues that should be addressed. Participants also noted the imbalanced tax structure between the states of Washington and Idaho.
- *Opportunities.* Many of the participants cited the potential to form a port district in the Spokane region. There is available land ready for manufacturing, however raw materials have to be imported, which is costly. Comments from the meeting included the idea of building a transportation system with a regional focus. There was interest

in getting manufacturers to use air freight, which would also help expand the demand for air freight options. Participants expressed a need to maintain aging infrastructure.

Bicyclists/Pedestrians

The bicyclists/pedestrians roundtable was held on July 14th, 2010, from 6-8 p.m. at Center Place in Spokane Valley. This roundtable covered issues, assets and opportunities related to the regional transportation system, and identified potential partnerships.

- *Issues.* Comments from the roundtable identified a number of challenges related to a successful bicycle and pedestrian environment. These include a lack of incentives to bike, hilly topography and large parking lots that are not pedestrian friendly. Meeting participants discussed the issue of snow that is plowed into bike areas, and the need to accommodate other non-motorized modes such as scooters and skateboards. There was significant discussion related to complete sidewalks and curb cuts, and that the existing system has gaps and needs funding.
- *Assets and Opportunities.* Meeting participants identified numerous characteristics that make the Spokane region a great place. These include the area's climate, places to walk and bike (the Centennial Trail), special events (Summer Parkways, Spokefest) and the success created by the corridors and centers planning effort.
- *Partnerships.* Participants identified a need for increasing education and outreach to improve safety by all transportation modes. Partnerships included combining transportation improvements with stormwater projects, public health agencies, school districts, media and improved outreach and coordination among all jurisdictions.

Transit

The transit roundtable was held on August 3rd, 2010, from 6-8 p.m. at West Central Community Center in Spokane. During the meeting, participants discussed three topics: assets, challenges and elements of the regional vision.

- *Opportunities.* Participants discussed a need to consider the aging population with short distances to transit stops and more walkable environments for all. The presence of rail adds permanence that propels economic development and the North/South corridor can help with economic development.
- *Assets.* According to participants, the region has several assets. These include a lack of congestion; safe, livable neighborhoods; a sense of community; and preservation of the region's historical assets and green space. Participants felt that the existing transit service is a good value, and there is ample ROW.

- *Challenges.* There were also many challenges discussed at the meeting. These include construction costs, underused corridors and insufficient north/south corridors. The transit system runs on limited hours of operation which limits trips during evenings and weekends. Unpaved roadways and difficult intersections are also challenges.
- *Vision.* The meeting also included a discussion of vision elements. Participants feel the future transportation system should include an east/west rail system to connect with other cities; buses that connect to a central spine with multiple transit modes; and the use of new transit technologies. The regional transportation system will be sustainable and socially equitable, with sequenced development projects that support car-free living.

Senior Citizens

The senior citizen roundtable was held on August 4th, 2010, from 9-11 a.m. at the Corbin Senior Center in Spokane. The meeting focused on opportunities, assets and challenges to the transportation system, as well as a discussion of the overarching vision.

- *Opportunities and Assets.* Meeting participants spoke about integrating bus and paratransit service with variable vehicle types. The discussion included the potential for car free streets and reaching out to educate non-transit users. Participants identified a balanced approach between infrastructure and new development; one cannot occur without the other, but limited infrastructure limits ridership. Spokane is a tight-knit, family friendly community with great access to the outdoors. The area is affordable and there are great parks, cultural amenities and regional access.
- *Challenges.* The climate and winter conditions are a challenge. The fixed route system does not provide access to centers and corridors. There is a lack of signage and wayfinding, and lighting. Barriers, such as traffic islands, exist.
- *Vision elements.* Participants addressed the need for a regional transportation system that is aging friendly, with great access and transportation opportunities that are user friendly, integrated and sustainable. The system will be safe and visible, with good lighting and signage. The system will provide broader connectivity to the region and promote complete neighborhoods.

Kids, Parents and Families

The Kids, Parents and Families roundtable was held on August 4th, 2010 from 6-8 p.m. at the Corbin Senior Center in Spokane. The meeting focused on assets and opportunities, issues and the regional vision.

- *Assets and Opportunities.* The roundtable identified several elements that make Spokane such a great place to live. These include proximity to other cities, access to

parks and recreation opportunities, the climate and natural beauty of the region, and relatively low crime and friendliness of the community.

- *Issues.* The group also discussed several barriers to the continued success of Spokane. These include availability of jobs and improved public transportation, increasing taxes and fees, street condition, design and user conflicts, and a lack of awareness and education for all users. The meeting also included a discussion of school busing and that children living within a one-mile radius from schools cannot rely on busing.
- *Vision Elements.* The Kids, Parents and Families roundtable identified a future transportation system that has commuter transit and quality roads. The system is reliable and allows for choice and freedom of travel mode. The public is educated and informed about their transportation options and there is consideration for the environment.