

**MINUTES  
PORT OF TACOMA COMMISSION SPECIAL MEETING  
JULY 13, 2021**

The Port of Tacoma Commission met for a special meeting, July 13, 2021 at the Fabulich Center, Room 104, 3600 Port of Tacoma Road, Tacoma, Washington. Commissioners Kristin Ang, Deana Keller, John McCarthy, Dick Marzano, and Don Meyer were all present.

**1. CALL TO ORDER AND FLAG SALUTE**

The meeting was called to order at 12:02 p.m. and Commissioner Marzano lead the Pledge of Allegiance.

Port of Tacoma Executive Director, Eric Johnson provided opening comments.

**2. APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA**

Commissioners McCarthy and Meyer expressed concern that discussions regarding projects of importance to them, 11<sup>th</sup> Street Bridge, and intelligent transportation systems, are not slated for discussion until late in presentation materials. Commissioner McCarthy requested that the 11<sup>th</sup> Street Bridge discussion be moved up in the presentation. Rather than revising the order, staff offered to expedite the presentation.

**3. STUDY SESSION**

**A. Strategic Plan Implementation – Transportation Advocacy**

Presenters: Sean Eagan, Director, Government Affairs, Deirdre Wilson, Senior Manager Planning and Christine Wolf, Senior Planner

An overview of current advocacy efforts was provided.

Current advocacy efforts include projects related to State Route 167, Interstate 5 (I-5)/Port of Tacoma Road Interchange Phase 2, Fishing Wars Memorial Bridge, Blair Deepening and the Banana Yard Switch Upgrade. Combined costs to the Port for these projects include \$30 million toward the SR 167 completion. It was noted that the \$30 million includes land not just cash. The Port also contributed \$1.5 million toward Phase 1 I-5 interchange, and less than \$1 million toward Fishing Wars Memorial Bridge. The Banana Yard is a \$4.27 million project. The Port is seeking \$2.5 million in federal funding for that project.

Commissioner Keller commented that when able and appropriate, the Homeports should consider coordinate support efforts or potential funding efforts with the NWSA. Commissioner McCarthy cautioned to keep in mind that things are a lot more expensive in Seattle.

Secondary transportation advocacy efforts were described including projects and/or funding from the Port's Local Economic Development Investment Fund (LEDIF) toward transportation road projects in the City of Lakewood, Puyallup and Sumner.

Transportation Advocacy Strategy TA-2 of the Strategic Plan reads, "Advocate for the transportation infrastructure and system management needs of Port-related businesses in the Tideflats and Pierce County."

Staff asked the Commission whether the NWSA or Port of Tacoma should lead transportation advocacy priorities beyond Pierce County.

- Commissioner Keller identified the need to include the NWSA and Homeports in this policy discussion.

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- Commissioner McCarthy offered that at the lowest level of support, the Port can expand its boundaries and support in coordination with the NWSA. At the advocacy level, the Port must weigh whether the advocacy detracts from other things which the Port is advocating. At the highest level, financial support, geography should be confined to the Tideflats and Pierce County.
- Commissioner Meyer stated his priority will always be the Tideflats and trade corridors in Pierce County, including unincorporated Pierce County. When appropriate for grant funding opportunities he may support packaging grant applications with the NWSA.
- Commissioner Marzano stressed the importance of speaking with one voice on projects of significance for Puget Sound and the region. Cities and communities also need to be involved.
- Commissioner Ang agreed with Commissioner Marzano in using the combined strength of the Homeports and the NWSA when tackling projects that impact the gateway, competitiveness and the state. However, she does not want projects of priority to the Port of Tacoma to be lost to the priorities of the NWSA.
- The expense of investments/projects in the waterways was noted. The all in number for all three phases of the harbor deepening project is \$170 million.
- There are no immediate rail projects being recommended by staff, though staff noted that rail crossing blockage notification as technology to look into.
- Tideflats Intelligent Transportation Systems Plan long-term projects were summarized. Commissioner Meyer stated that installing an ITS system along Taylor Way should be a priority as a safety issue.

An overview of roadway projects and partner agencies was provided by staff. Including projects with Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT), City of Tacoma, City of Fife and Pierce County.

- The Portland Avenue Freight and Access Improvements Project of the City of Tacoma is in design. Commissioner McCarthy would like the Port to that the project include repaving Portland Avenue all the way up to East 11<sup>th</sup> street. The City does not have funding for construction at this time.
- The status of the Vulnerability Assessment and Response Framework (VARF) was discussed. The Port is in the assessment stage.
- Commissioner Ang asked about efforts toward smart port technology beyond RFIDs such as digital infrastructure. Ninety-nine percent of that body of work is handled by NWSA operations. Staff described a pilot project in Seattle by WSDOT regarding a virtual command center. Staff is engaged at a technical level.
- Commissioner Ang asked where clean energy transition fits into transportation advocacy goals. Staff commented that clean energy is incorporated throughout the Strategic Plan including in Transportation Advocacy, however it is most clearly addressed in Environmental Advocacy under air quality.
- The current design concept favored by the City of Tacoma is replacement of the East 11<sup>th</sup> Street Bridge and viaduct. Staff reported their understanding that the cheapest estimate to demolish the existing bridge is \$10 million, however, to demolish in such a way as to support a new bridge, the estimate for demolition is approximately \$40 million. The 2019 cost estimate to replace the bridge and the viaduct adds another \$150 million.
- The criteria to determine priorities needs to be set.
- Commissioner McCarthy stated the 11<sup>th</sup> Street Bridge is a project he could lobby for.
- Commissioner Marzano noted these projects take decades and commissioners will need to consider how the 11<sup>th</sup> Street corridor will look in the future.
- Other roadway projects include
  - 54<sup>th</sup> and Taylor corridor between 8<sup>th</sup> and the 509 and Taylor intersection. It is in the concept design stage.

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- Also in the concept stage are improvements to the 54<sup>th</sup> Avenue interchange with an additional bridge.
- Wapato Way – New 167 Frontage Road.
- Canyon Road Regional Connection. Mega project, enormously expensive.
  - Commissioner Meyer commented on the potential use of mitigation credits to support this project. He noted that although the Port is no longer a property owner in Frederickson, the issue of trucks in the community remains. He wants to see this project done. Where it falls into the priorities of the Port has yet to be decided.
- Staff reported that the I-5 South-bound HOV lanes project should be complete by the end of the year.
- Staff displayed a map providing a geographic reference of staff-recommended Roadway Advocacy Projects.

Sample decision criteria to determine and prioritize projects was presented for Commissioner feedback.

- Commissioner McCarthy commented that the criteria listed is not weighted. He added that the Central Peninsula is not accessible over the Blair Waterway. It is only accessible from the south. There is a need to improve the ability to move freight across the Puyallup River. The simple solution is Puyallup Avenue and the bridge. Ingress and egress to the Central Peninsula is needed, not just for safety reasons, but for its primary function of freight mobility.
- Commissioner Meyer commented that previous investment by the Port should be added to criteria. He commented that in his vision of the future 11<sup>th</sup> Street Bridge corridor, the bridge is gone. Instead he would consider advocating for Lincoln because of the previous work by the Port on the overpass. He wants to see more pros and cons relative to the dollar amount. The master plan for the terminals must be considered as well. He believes 11<sup>th</sup> Street will be totally vacated. He commented on needs for Piers 3 and 4 and the moving of the North Intermodal Yard.
- Commissioner Keller commented on the need to act quickly as funding partners and stakeholders will be receiving infrastructure grants.
- Commissioner Marzano commented that when the 11<sup>th</sup> Street bridge was functional, it wasn't used for containers as there was no where for them to go. He added the bridge would likely be for personal vehicles and the price tag is too high especially if planning to increasing terminal space 30 years down the road.
- Commissioner Meyer repeated that more facts are needed to make decisions on the various alternatives. A small study was done and staff will reshare. The study did not include a thorough modeling exercise on the alternatives.
- Commissioner Marzano summarized that based on today's discussion it is clear the Commission needs more information and that it will come at a cost. The Executive Director has the ability under the delegation of authority to spend.
- Executive Director, Eric Johnson, commented he has a more work to do in coordinating between the Port and the Alliance vision.

### 14. ADJOURN

The meeting ended at 2:08 p.m.



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Dick Marzano, President  
Port of Tacoma Commission

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Attest:

*Deanna M. Keller*

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Deanna M. Keller, Secretary  
Port of Tacoma Commission

*Juliet Campbell*

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Juliet Campbell, Clerk of the Port  
Port of Tacoma