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Interagency Meeting Minutes/Recap
October 26, 2011 –Snohomish County Campus, Everett, WA

Attendees

Seventeen people attended the interagency meeting at the Snohomish County Campus in Everett, including representatives from the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), U.S. Forest Service (USFS), Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT), and Snohomish County Public Works (SCPW)--see list of attendees at end of minutes.

Meeting Minutes-A summary of the discussion associated with the agenda items is provided below.

1. Introductions

The interagency meeting started with a round of introductions in which everyone identified themselves, their agency affiliation, and their role in the project. A meeting agenda handout was provided to attendees, along with exhibits that included the following:

- A project flowchart identifying the project's environmental review process milestones. The flowchart will be updated as milestones are achieved.
- An aerial photo exhibit with the proposed roadway alignment.

In addition to the handouts, project photos and images were projected into the room's Smart Screen, as well as content from the project's website. Photos viewed showed areas along both the existing roadway alignment and the proposed alignment.

2. Meeting Purpose

Following introductions, Crilly Ritz facilitated the meeting and initiated meeting discussion by stating that the primary purpose of the meeting was to follow up on changes in the project's NEPA process. The NEPA process was initially discussed at the July 6, 2011 Interdisciplinary Team meeting. The principal change addressed by discussion was the determination on August 31, 2011 that the project's NEPA documentation would now be elevated to preparation of a NEPA Environmental Assessment (NEPA EA). FHWA determined that a NEPA EA would be the more appropriate level of document preparation. The general agreement on documentation to be prepared, the general framework for document preparation and submittal, and other processes discussed at the July 6, 2011 meeting will now be modified to include NEPA EA preparation.

Trevin Taylor, Environmental Engineer with WSDOT Highways and Local Programs for the Northwest Region, introduced discussion focused on assessing the environmental work completed to date so that

the project can determine to what extent efforts to date correspond to the 39-step process identified in the *Highways and Local Programs Process for NEPA Environmental Assessments* (contained in *Appendix M* of the *WSDOT Highways and Local Programs Environmental Classification Summary Guidebook*). It was decided that Snohomish County would assess the work completed to date after the meeting to determine how far along in the process the project has moved forward on. The County would report back to WSDOT and USFS on the progress and identify the next step in the NEPA process for the project.

After this discussion, Snohomish County discussed its intent to move forward with the planning and scheduling of a NEPA public scoping meeting, and identified a tentative late 2011/early 2012 timeframe for the public meeting. There was consensus that this would be a good approach to public involvement and that the timing of the meetings would be best determined by Snohomish County. Coordination on legal notices and other public meeting specifics would begin in the weeks following the interagency meeting. Eric Ozog of the USFS provided comments on the draft NEPA scoping notice routed for review prior to the meeting. The primary comment included a recommendation that USFS and FHWA contacts be included in the scoping notice in addition to Snohomish County contact information.

With regard to NEPA EA format, it was confirmed that the NEPA EA would be prepared consistent with the reader-friendly format promoted by FHWA/WSDOT in recent years. The reader friendly format uses graphics, tables, and more easily understood language in an effort to make environmental review documents more accessible and understandable to the general public. The discipline/specialist reports to be prepared in support of the NEPA EA will use the standard technical report format. Eric Ozog and Doug Schrenk of the USFS added that they would provide a link to the NEPA EA document on the USFS Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest website when the document is issued.

It was confirmed that NEPA EA issuance would not occur until the Section 106 National Historic Preservation Act and Section 7 Endangered Species Act consultation processes have been concluded, unless extenuating circumstances warranted early NEPA issuance.

3. Agency Roles and Responsibilities

Consistent with past determinations, FHWA will continue to be the lead NEPA agency and the USFS will be a cooperating agency. FHWA will work with WSDOT to perform the NEPA tasks and approvals that will be required for NEPA approval of the project. Extensive coordination with the USFS will occur to ensure that analysis required for USFS requirements will be included in NEPA documentation. FHWA and USFS concurred with the approach to have the NEPA EA discuss the proposed project and the no-action alternative. The NEPA EA would also provide discussion of alternatives considered but rejected for further consideration. Appendices would be used as needed to provide documentation in support of the NEPA EA, including coordination and communications with agencies and other stakeholders. It was discussed that the NEPA EA appendices may include copies of discipline/specialist reports on a disk.

4. Effects to the Project Schedule/Increased NEPA/Environmental Review Costs

Snohomish County identified that the NEPA EA would increase environmental review costs and would require additional time to finish. The expected timeline for NEPA EA issuance was not anticipated at the

time of the Design Report issuance in Spring 2011. It was noted that there is uncertainty as to how much the project's timeline would be affected. There was consensus that the estimated construction advertisement date could likely shift to 2015 from the more expedited 2013 timeframe that was associated with the more streamlined NEPA Documented CE level of documentation.

5. Specialist /Discipline Reports

A meeting is scheduled for November 9, 2011 at the County Campus and will be attended by project team members from Public Works and USFS staff. Those attending are either preparing discipline/specialist reports or will be USFS staff who are reviewing reports. This meeting will provide an opportunity for coordination amongst document preparers to ensure that future reports are prepared consistent with what is required. Project update information will be provided and contacts established for future communication on specific reports and their requirements.

The challenge of providing stormwater flow control and quality treatment in the project corridor due to topography and the desire to limit site disturbance was discussed. Lisa Tario from Public Works -Engineering Services discussed these challenges and recommended use of the *Highway Runoff Manual* as the more appropriate stormwater manual to use on the project because the manual provides stormwater Best Management Practices (BMPs) that are more suitable for linear roadway projects. It was noted that the Highway Runoff Manual has been deemed to be equivalent to the 2005 Department of Ecology Stormwater Management Manual for Western Washington. FHWA/WSDOT concurred with the recommendation. Future technical consideration of project stormwater related issues will be coordinated between WSDOT and Snohomish County design staff as the design process advances.

The discussion of 4(f) issues initiated at the July 6, 2011 meeting and the question as to whether its provisions would apply to the project was discussed further. Recent evidence suggests that 4(f) may not apply to the project because 1.) the project area is not managed for recreation-there are no campgrounds or trailheads/trails in the project area 2.) Only dispersed recreation is present in the project area, which is exempt from 4(f) applicability, 3.)The North Fork Skykomish River is neither a designated Wild and Scenic River or a Study River. It was determined that recreation issues as they pertain to the project would still be addressed in a report, but that 4(f) issues do not appear to be part of the project. It was determined that follow-up coordination with the U.S. Forest Service will be conducted and these communications will be forwarded to FHWA/WSDOT to achieve resolution of 4 (f) applicability.

6. Public Involvement

Tina Hokansen of Public Works-Communications provided an update of the public involvement efforts since the July 6, 2011 meeting. The project continues to receive calls and e-mails from the public regarding the status of the project. Tina discussed the project's website while it was being projected on the room's Smart Board. In addition to postings of project-related information

generated to date, it was noted that the website postings include the meeting minutes from the July 6, 2011 IDT meeting, the August 31, 2011 determination by FHWA that a NEPA EA would now be prepared, and the web posting of the Project's Public Involvement Plan (PIP). The need to amend and update the PIP to reflect the recent NEPA process changes and the associated project schedule changes was identified. Public involvement efforts in the immediate future will be focused on the planning and scheduling of a NEPA public scoping meeting and project website updates.

7. Project Team Progress on tasks since July 6, 2011 IDT meeting

Several updates were provided summarizing the field work completed since the last meeting.

Wetland /Stream Delineation Field Work

Irene Sato from Public Works -Environmental Services said that four wetlands were identified and delineated along the proposed roadway alignment and nine streams. All of the streams with the exception of a stream associated with a large wetland near the project's east are non-fish bearing. The stream associated with the large wetland provides seasonal rearing and refugia habitat during high flows when the wetland is inundated and there is a surface water connection to the river. Large culverts will be needed in this area to maintain hydrologic connectivity and fish passage. All of the wetlands and streams have been surveyed. The extent of impacts will be identified once they are provided as a layer into the project plans for impact analysis. It was noted that the side channels along the existing damaged roadway alignment provide extensive spawning and rearing habitat. Pink salmon were observed spawning in October.

Geotechnical Boring Field Work

Dale Topham-Public Works Geotech Supervisor provided a geotechnical summary. Geotechnical boring field work was conducted in August and September and used helicopters for access and transport of drilling equipment to avoid impacts that would have been associated with an access road. This work was conducted after receiving USFS review and approval. The preliminary data and findings of the geotech borings were discussed. Amongst the findings, it has been determined that some areas along the proposed alignment will be conducive for stormwater runoff infiltration while other segments will not be able to infiltrate. Two portions of the roadway have soils that are potentially unstable. The preliminary recommendation is to shift the alignment 10-20 feet closer to the river to avoid areas that would require extensive excavation and much more extensive site disturbance to achieve the level of slope stability desired. A combination of walls and rock buttress toes may be needed for slope stabilization and to minimize the roadway footprint.

Photo Field Work for Visual Quality Analysis

Photos from the field work were viewed that showed the existing and proposed roadway alignment. Preliminary before-and-after simulations were provided. It was noted that the visual quality simulation is preliminary and that more work would be done to refine the exhibits.

Mitigation Reconnaissance of Existing Alignment

Paul Marczin of Public Works-Environmental Services provided a summary of recent site visits to evaluate the potential for mitigation along the damaged existing roadway alignment. Photos of the existing alignment were viewed on the screen so that attendees could see the areas where in-stream restoration could be achieved with asphalt removal. There is a limited area where plantings could be done to provide riparian buffer restoration. Access to these areas during construction was identified as one of the biggest challenges. The technical feasibility of total asphalt/concrete removal was identified as an issue that would need to be evaluated as the project design plans and construction techniques are developed. The project team will coordinate with construction staff and potentially contractors to evaluate access feasibility.

Forest Service Field Surveys

Eric Ozog of the USFS provided an update of the status of USFS staff efforts, noting that field surveys have been underway for cultural resources, botanical, and survey and manage wildlife reports and that they are substantially completed for now. Report writing has begun. It is likely that the archaeologist and botanist will need to go out and conduct more survey field work due to the potential for the alignment to shift in a couple of locations and to also evaluate access points that will be needed to access the existing alignment.

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