



Washington State Transportation Commission

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Commission Asks Public to “Speak out on Transportation”

Voice of Washington State Online Discussion Forums and Survey launched to garner policy input

OLYMPIA, Wash. – June 28, 2012 – The Washington State Transportation Commission (WSTC) today launched the Voice of Washington State (VOWS) statewide public engagement program, which includes seven regional online discussion forums and an online survey panel. The WSTC is asking state residents to log on to www.voiceofwashingtonstate.org to sign up and share input on how to improve the state’s transportation system.

Individuals can join the [VOWS Online Discussion Forums](#) and publicly voice their opinions, post ideas and interact with other citizens in their community. They can also join the [VOWS Survey Panel](#) to participate in occasional online surveys. The Commission is using the new online forum technology to empower citizens to become thought-leaders on transportation.

“Sparking a robust conversation around transportation issues, and collecting survey data that indicates people’s opinions and thoughts on policy and funding approaches, will help decision makers identify possible solutions and investment priorities,” noted Reema Griffith, executive director of the WSTC. “When people share what matters to them when they drive, ride, bike, walk or fly within their communities, their needs can be more effectively addressed.”

The ultimate goal is to gather public input on Washington state transportation policy and funding, and to inform the statewide discussion and decision-making process. Topics for discussion will focus on all things transportation: highways, mass transit, freight and high-speed rail, ferries, barges and aviation. The governor and Legislature will be briefed on the ideas and data generated through the online discussion forums and surveys.

The combination of the online survey and the regional online discussion forums is a new outreach strategy for the WSTC. While the Commission has conducted successful phone and email surveys through the Ferry Riders Opinion Group for a few years, the primary community input tool has been public meetings. The online tools remove the distance and travel barriers inherent to public meetings; this increases the opportunity for everyone – no matter where they live – to participate and share their views.

Details about the VOWS program components are as follows:

- The VOWS Online Discussion Forums are for publicly sharing, voting and commenting on regional and statewide transportation ideas. Participants can join any or all of the seven regional discussion forums.
- The VOWS Survey Panel is a way for citizens to communicate their opinions and preferences by taking occasional surveys on transportation policy, funding and tax issues. The result is statistically valid data representing the priorities and opinions of Washington state residents. The input from individuals is anonymous because the survey company does not attach personal information to the survey results. Each participant will receive the surveys through email.

The seven regional discussion forums are as follows: West (Region 1), North Puget Sound (Region 2), Central Puget Sound (Region 3), Southwest (Region 4), Central (Region 5), Northeast (Region 6) and Southeast (Region 7). Discussions within each forum will focus on both region-specific issues as well as statewide topics, such as roads and pedestrian safety.

Any Washington state resident is eligible to join the VOWS Online Discussion Forums or the VOWS Survey Panel. Registration is limited to one email address per person; submission of the person's name, email address and county is all that is required to set up a VOWS account for participation.

To learn more about the WSTC, go to www.wstc.wa.gov.

ABOUT THE WASHINGTON STATE TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

The Washington State Transportation Commission provides a public forum for transportation policy development. It reviews and assesses how the entire transportation system works across the state and issues the state's 20-year Transportation Plan. As the State Tolling Authority, the Commission adopts tolls for state highways and bridges and fares for Washington State Ferries. There are seven Commissioners representing the state: Philip Parker (Clark County), Richard Ford (King County), Dan O'Neal (Mason County), Tom Cowan (San Juan County), Joe Tortorelli, (Spokane County) and Anne Haley (Walla Walla County). www.wstc.wa.gov