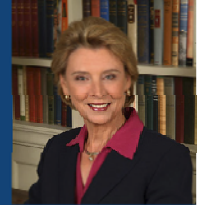




Governor Chris Gregoire

GOVERNMENT MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTABILITY & PERFORMANCE



## Transportation GMAP Forum Summary

**APRIL 22, 2008**

Governor Chris Gregoire said today Washington “cannot pave our way out” of highway congestion problems, and she endorsed a strategy to coordinate improvements in specific traffic corridors that cause the biggest delays for travelers.

Speaking at a GMAP accountability meeting, Gregoire told leaders of the state Department of Transportation to design congestion-relief projects – and measure the results of those projects – based on how they affect travel times for citizens and businesses who use the highway system.

Washington’s population increased by 50% and vehicle miles traveled jumped by more than 100% between 1980 and 2005, while the number of highway miles increased by less than 10%. “We cannot pave our way out of this problem, even if we want to,” she said. “We have got to look at other innovative, cost-effective ways to address this problem.”

Paula Hammond, WSDOT secretary, told Gregoire the department is attacking congestion in three ways by: (1) improving the efficiency of the highway system; (2) reducing demand by giving motorists more travel options, and (3) expanding highway capacity strategically. Gregoire said she wants these strategies focused on specific traffic corridors – such as the prime commute routes in the Puget Sound core, Spokane, and Vancouver – and wants to select congestion-relieving strategies based on specific problems in each region.

The Governor told Hammond she wanted the state to make project decisions and measure the results from the perspective of highway users. She cited DOT data that shows motorists’ average speed increasing by about 20 mph on the Tacoma Narrows Bridge after the new span opened last year.

“We need to be able to tell the public at large, and the Legislature, ‘Here’s the difference this project made in the lives of people,’” Gregoire said.

Specifically, she directed DOT to report the results from motorists’ perspectives of several tactics being used to fight highway slowdowns, including (1) calibrating traffic signals to improve vehicle flow, (2) using meters to regulate highway on-ramps, (3) using vanpools and Park and Ride programs to reduce single-occupant commute trips, and (4) charging tolls for motorists to use lanes that are currently reserved for multi-occupant vehicles.

Also at the forum:

- The department provided data showing the range of travel times for motorists who commute to Seattle from several locations in King and Snohomish counties. Trips that take 10 to 30 minutes at

posted speed limits often take twice or three times as long during peak commute periods – especially for people who have to dependably arrive by specific times.

- Office of Financial Management Director Victor Moore encouraged the department to place a higher priority on its effort to retime traffic signals. DOT data shows a 40-to-1 return on investment when signals are adjusted to reduce travel times, but only 55% of state-owned signals are being reviewed on schedule.
- Gregoire called for more aggressive goals to expand the use of commute options such as van pools and Park and Ride lots. She also directed the department to provide more specific accountability information in its action plans for future activities. “Who is responsible?” she asked. “What are they going to do, and what will the driver see?”

For more information, visit the forum page:

<http://www.accountability.wa.gov/reports/transportation/default.asp>