

Lower Snake River Dams Transportation Study

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Background

The Snake River from Clarkston to Pasco contains four dams (Ice Harbor, Lower Monumental, Little Goose, and Lower Granite). There is interest in removing these dams for the benefit of salmon, steelhead, Pacific lamprey, bull trout, sturgeon, and other native fish species. Understanding the transportation impacts of removing these lower Snake River dams has not been sufficiently addressed in recent studies. As a result, the 2023 Transportation Budget (HB 2134, Section 217 (9)) directed the WSDOT to conduct a study of highway, road, and freight rail transportation needs if the dams were removed. The study needs to consider options and impacts from shifting the movement of freight and goods (that currently move by barge through the lower Snake River dams) to highways, other roads, and rail. The study must generate freight volume estimates along with origin-destination data and evaluate scenarios for changes in road/rail infrastructure and operations that will be necessary to address the redistribution of those additional volumes from river barges. The assessment must include quantitative analysis based on available data in terms of both financial and carbon emission costs. The analysis must also include a robust inclusive public engagement process to solicit feedback from interested community members.

Progress

During the second quarter of 2024, we completed the following tasks:

- Jacobs began work on Phase 1 of the study with subcontractors PRR and CPCS.
- Jacobs completed a Project Management Plan to specify the workstreams needed to complete each task, the schedule of deliverables for Phase 1, and the quality control process.
- Developed the draft Community Engagement Plan.
- Initiated analysis of the existing conditions for barge, rail, and truck movements. Started the development of the Total Logistics Cost (TLC) modal diversion model.

Subcontractors Initiated

Jacobs issued a Notice to Proceed (NTP) to CPCS on April 30, 2024, so they may begin work on the barge analysis and development of the TLC modal diversion model for the study. A NTP for PRR was issued on May 3, 2024, so they can start supporting the engagement activities for the study.

Project Management Plan

The consultant team developed a Project Management Plan (PMP) based on discussions with WSDOT to direct the work to be done throughout the study. The components of the PMP include the organization of WSDOT, Jacobs, and subcontractors within the study; a quality control plan; a change management plan; and a preliminary scope of work.

Community Engagement Plan and Ongoing Coordination

The consultant team has developed a draft Community Engagement Plan (CEP) that describes how the study team will engage with key interested parties and community members. The CEP includes an equity approach supported by a demographic analysis of Tri-Cities, Pomeroy, Colfax, and Clarkston. The categories of the analysis are languages spoken, poverty level, internet

access, and race. The CEP also includes strategies to promote diversity and inclusion for low-income populations and people with disabilities. The consultant team also describes upcoming engagement activities in the CEP, including four meetings of a Technical Advisory Committee with the first meeting occurring in late July. The CEP will undergo a final review with the WSDOT Steering Committee, USACE, and JTC prior to being finalized.

The study team continued coordination with several entities through a series of meetings during the 2nd quarter including:

- WSDOT Executive Steering Committee
- The US Army Corps of Engineers
- The Joint Transportation Committee
- Federal Highway Administration
- Governor's Office

Additional meetings that have been requested by interested parties have been responded to by the WSDOT Study Lead. Engagement directly with the consultant team has been reserved for the community engagement process that Jacobs will be conducting.

Analysis

The consultant team conducted analysis of the following:

- Identification of the primary barge, rail, and grain terminals along with associated connecting roads.
- Beginning the process of estimating speeds, volumes, and origin-destination patterns for the primary freight facilities to understand current performance levels.
- Determining rail flows within the study area by origin-destination-commodity characteristics for the base year and a future year.
- Estimating rail capacity using historical information developed in the Washington State Rail Plan and developing options for understanding future levels of usage on the highest volume rail infrastructure in the study area.
- Initiating the development of seasonal factors for barge, rail, and truck activities.
- Development of maps to describe existing conditions and freight flows in the region.
- Developing an early version of the Barge Assessment Technical Report which is under internal review within the consulting team.
- Developing the framework and specifications for formulating the Total Logistics Cost (TLC) modal diversion model that will estimate the amount of freight traffic that diverts from current barge operations to either rail or downstream barge locations in current and future scenarios. Conducted over 20 one-on-one outreach meetings to freight industry representatives to discuss model inputs.

Next Steps

The work that we anticipate completing during the next quarterly period includes the following activities:

- Full execution of subcontractors to be utilized by Jacobs to conduct Phase 1 of the study.
- Completion of the Barge Assessment Technical Report for review by the WSDOT Executive Steering Committee, USACE, and JTC.
- Completion of the Truck and Rail Activity Technical Report for review by the WSDOT Executive Steering Committee, USACE, and JTC.
- Conducting an initial outreach meeting to the Technical Advisory Committee.
- Complete the base year portion of the TLC model for review by the Technical Advisory Committee.
- Develop an outline for the Interim Report.

TIMELINE

