

January Public Works Board Meeting Recap

A regular update provided by PWB members Pam Carter and Diane Pottinger

Legislative Update – The Governor’s [budget](#) released in December included \$ 70 million for the [construction loan list](#) in the capital budget, considerably less than the \$170 million Board recommendation, and did not include the Board’s request for additional staff to maintain existing services. The project list was reduced by removing projects eligible to apply for federal funding, all pre-construction loans, and all emergency loans. Additionally the Governor’s budget allocated money from the Public Works Assistance Account (PWAA) for some programs (Growth Management Services unit and the Conservation Commission’s Voluntary Stewardship Program) that have **not** historically been funded from that account. Next month the Board will begin consideration of which services it will want to continue at a reduced level and which services will be discontinued.

Of course, the Governor’s budget is just the first step. Next both the House and the Senate will each write a budget for the 2015-17 biennium. It is likely the two versions will be very different. If you’re interested in learning more about the budget process, you may want to read last year’s [Citizen’s Guide to the Washington State Budget](#).

No Construction Loan List for 2015 – Despite the very large statewide infrastructure needs, the Public Works Board will not be accepting loan applications for the 2015 cycle. This is directly related to the “sweep” of money from the Public Works Assistance Account (PWAA) into the Education Legacy Account and the proposed redirection of funding from taxes originally established to fund Public Works loans. This is concerning because the PWAA depends upon loan repayments to keep the fund growing. Currently the only money flowing into the account is a small 2% of the REET and loan repayments. If no new loans are made and the traditional funding sources continue to be redirected, the amount available for loans will decline and eventually disappear. A portion of the loan repayments are also used to staff technical assistance programs whether or not any loans are issued.

Legislative Bill – The Public Works Board has authorized the drafting of a bill to incorporate some improvements to the Board’s authorizing statute and to address three key elements in the 2013 proviso language. The bill would include adding 4 legislators to the Board (one from each caucus of each chamber) and using the bond market to help set interest rates. The PWB, including those of us representing Special Purpose District, support this bill. We hope to have the bill dropped by the end of the month. Remember, you can track the status of any bill at <http://app.leg.wa.gov/billinfo/>

Meeting with the Legislators – Prior to and following the meeting, Board members and staff met with many key legislators to educate them on the work the Board does to help local agencies improve and maintain infrastructure in our state. Have you spoken to your District’s legislators about the importance of preserving the Public Works loan program?

PWB Winter Newsletter – We encourage you to read *Infrastructure: a Foundation for Economic Development* in the [PWB’s Winter Newsletter](#) in which our fellow Boardmember Lisa Wellman points out the important role of infrastructure to our state’s economy.