

Public Engagement Summary: Bridge Type Selection, Early 2021



Overview

After receiving strong community support for the recommended Replacement Long Span as the Preferred Alternative for an earthquake-ready Burnside Bridge, Multnomah County proceeded into the Bridge Type Selection phase. This phase is aimed at studying and selecting a preferred bridge type to carry into the design phase and then construction. The first round of engagement for the Bridge Type Selection phase kicked off in early 2021.

The purpose of this engagement was to inform the public of the status of the project and seek input on a range of possible bridge types and a list of evaluation criteria topics for comparing them.

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The primary activities for this engagement were focused online, with an online open house and survey, a project webinar and numerous virtual briefings with community organizations. This report summarizes the activities performed and feedback received throughout January and February 2021.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, no tabling or in-person events were held.

Public Outreach Activities

Outreach and engagement activities included:

60+	Briefings to agencies, individuals, and organizations
18	Diversity, Equity and Inclusion organizations reached
11,900+	Unique visitors to the online open house and survey
1,900+	Survey responses
6	In-language translations of the online open house and materials
186,000	Social media impressions
3,183	Project E-newsletter recipients
120	Text message recipients
2,216	YouTube video views
11	News releases and e-newsletters (from project and others)
2	Banners over the Burnside Bridge
5	Media stories

Public Involvement Goals

Awareness

Build awareness and share information through regular, meaningful, and consistent project communications about the important role this project plays in creating an earthquake-ready river crossing in downtown Portland.

Transparency

Inform all stakeholders and community of how the project team has thoroughly considered their feedback, interests, issues, and concerns in project solutions and transparently communicate how project decisions are being made.

Inclusion

Provide equitable, inclusive, and accessible opportunities for stakeholders and community to influence and shape the project by reducing participation barriers, ensuring culturally responsive practices, and offering diverse ways for all people to participate in project conversations.

Coordination

Engage and build authentic relationships with agencies, industry stakeholders, and County departments, securing cross-government coordination, commitment, alignment, and industry readiness, to realize the Earthquake Ready Burnside Bridge in the future.

Key Findings Overview

Broad input was received encompassing a large range of perspectives. This report summarizes themes identified in this feedback. Key findings include:

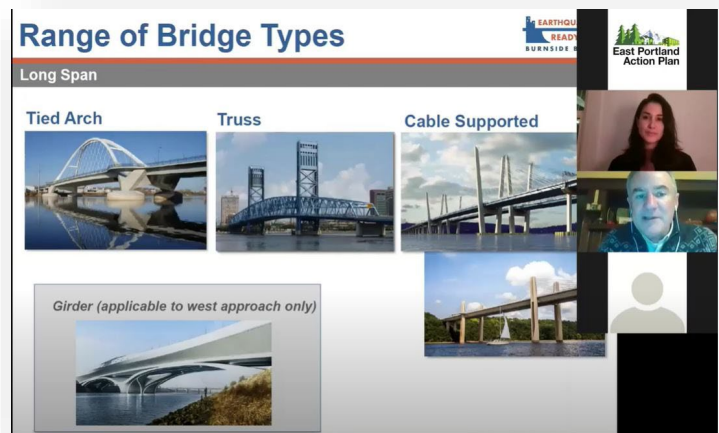
- Strong and about equal levels of support for the Cable Supported and Tied Arch bridge options
- Some support for a Girder option on the west side approach of the bridge
- Strong preference for a Bascule movable span over a vertical lift movable span

Activity: Briefings

Purpose

From December 2020 through February 2021, the project team conducted over 60 briefings with community organizations, individuals, agencies and elected officials. The intent of the briefings was to keep stakeholders and interested groups up-to-date and engaged with the project, continue to build meaningful relationships and gather community input to inform the project, process and Bridge Type Selection.

Opportunities to request a project briefing were offered through emails, phone calls, project newsletters and the project website.



Online briefing with the East Portland Action Plan in February

Generally, information presented and engaged upon during the briefings included:

- Project overview, timeline, purpose and need
- Range of bridge type options being studied (shown in renderings)
- Evaluation criteria topics for selecting a bridge type
- Input on the range of bridge type options and evaluation criteria topics
- Update on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement and comment opportunity
- Outreach activities and ways to provide input
- Next steps in the process

Briefings were provided to a number of different stakeholders and community organizations representing various interests, including:



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- Transportation (pedestrians and people with ambulatory devices, bicyclists, transit users, drivers and freight movers)
- Emergency response and resiliency
- Social services
- Diversity, Equity and Inclusion and BIPOC communities
- Neighborhoods and residents
- Right of way and property owners
- Businesses
- Historic resources
- Visual aesthetics and urban design
- Parks and community spaces and recreational activities
- Event organizers
- River users
- Sustainability
- Local, regional, state and federal agencies and elected officials

Below is a summary of the most frequently heard themes:

- General support and understanding for the project
- High interest in an elegant and balanced solution
- Higher interest in the Cable Supported and Tied Arch options than the Truss and Girder options
- Understanding for why the Girder option is being explored on the west approach
- High interest in options that minimize impacts to views
- Strong support for bascule movable span. Low support for lift movable span
- Frequent questions about which of the two movable spans opens and closes faster
- Opinions for both a symmetrical looking bridge and an asymmetrical bridge with higher support for symmetry. People that expressed support for a symmetrical bridge also stated balance, elegance and cohesion as items of interest. People that expressed interest in an asymmetrical bridge stated 'keep Portland weird' or acknowledged the different characteristics of the east and west neighborhoods.
- People expressed interest in making sure the option aligns with community values of safe, accessible, equitable and climate conscious transportation facilities



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- Some people expressed opinions that the look is less important than making sure the bridge is resilient during a major earthquake and asked questions and expressed support for whichever option is best for seismic resiliency
- Some people said to not look at the bridge as three separate parts (west, middle, east), but one cohesive structure

Activity: Webinar

Purpose and Summary

The project team hosted a public webinar on Wednesday, February 3, 2021. The purpose of the webinar was to:

- Provide a supplemental or alternative way to learn about the project and the various bridge type options in addition to the online open house.
- Provide the opportunity to virtually meet some members of the project team, especially because of restrictions to in-person events.
- Provide an opportunity for people to ask questions directly to the project team and get answers in real-time, especially for individuals who do not belong to an organization that receives project briefings.

The event was hosted on Zoom and livestreamed to YouTube for greater accessibility. A total of 32 participants joined the Zoom meeting and 10 viewers logged onto the livestream.

A [recording of the webinar](#) is available to view on Multnomah County's YouTube channel.

Activity: Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Outreach

Purpose

Multnomah County partnered with the Community Engagement Liaisons (CELs) Program to continue bridging relationships and engaging with currently and historically underserved and underrepresented communities. The liaisons' efforts engaged the Black and African American, Native American, Vietnamese, Chinese, Latinx, Japanese, Arabic, and Russian and Ukrainian communities. These communities were identified in 2019 based on frequently spoken languages within a one-mile radius of the project area and/or because of historical and cultural roots in the project area.



Community Engagement Liaisons meeting



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Due to restrictions for in-person contacts during the COVID-19 pandemic, the liaisons employed several methods to help inform and gather input from their respective communities in January and February 2021 (see table below). These methods ranged from one-on-one telephone calls to outreach to community-based organizations and social media networks.

Multnomah County recognized the importance of variety and flexibility in outreach methods to allow for culturally appropriate engagement across communities, especially during a public health crisis. Each community engagement liaison worked with their respective community members and community-based organizations (CBO's) to use activities that were desired and appropriate for that community.

There was a total of 210 respondents to the translated survey sites. For comparison, there were 355 participants reached through online methods during Round 2 engagement for the Environmental Review in 2020, and 182 participants reached through in-person focus groups during Round 1 of the Environmental Review phase in 2019.

Outreach activities per community

	Phone or Zoom briefings	CBO outreach	Business Phone Canvassing/ flyering	Social Media
Black and African American	X		X	X
Native American	X	X	X	X
Arabic	X	X	X	X
Chinese	X		X	X
Japanese		X	X	X
Vietnamese	X	X	X	
Latinx	X	X	X	X
Russian/Ukrainian	X	X	X	X

Activity: Online Open House and Survey

Purpose and Reach

The Bridge Type Selection online open house and survey were available to the general public from January 22 through February 21, 2021. The sites remained open to Community Engagement Liaisons through February 23 to allow them more flexibility to engage with their communities. The online open house and survey provided an opportunity for people to learn about the status of the project and review and provide input on the range of possible Long Span bridge types, including the middle movable span, and the evaluation topics that would be used to compare them. The online open house and survey



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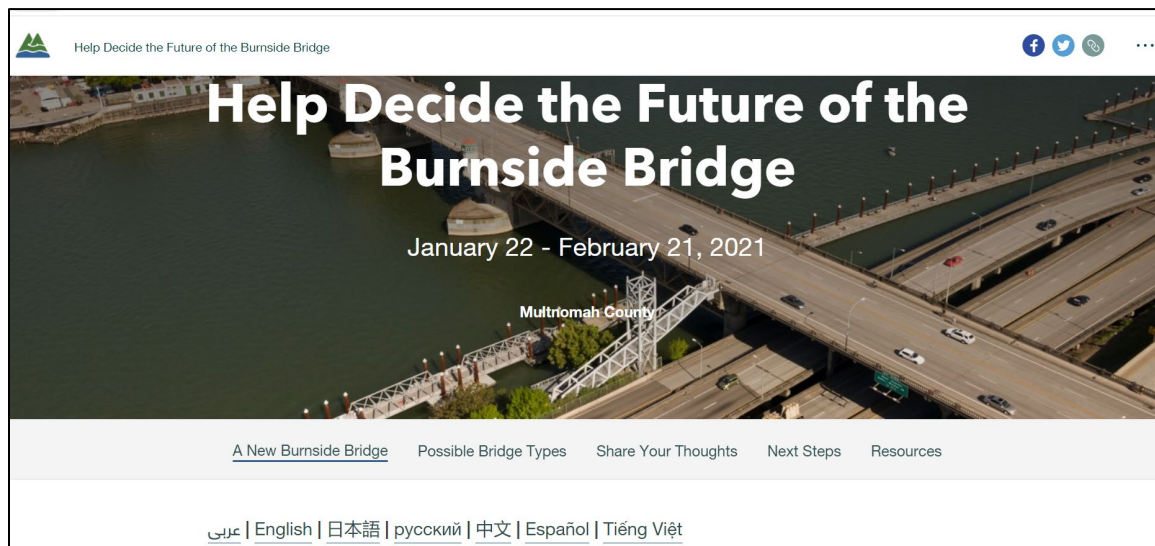
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included an interactive 360° video, captioned in seven languages, presenting the various bridge type options under consideration and some of their associated tradeoffs. The video is available to view on Multnomah County's YouTube channel:

- [A 360 View of Bridge Type Options](#) (>2,200 views as of 2/24/21)

The online open house and survey received nearly 12,000 visitors and over 1,900 responses. The survey included a mix of qualitative and open-ended questions. It also included travel mode and demographic information.



As an outreach and engagement tool, survey respondents were self-selected, and the results were not intended to be statistically valid.

Stakeholders were notified of the sites through a variety of notifications outlined in the Media and Notifications section in this report.

Survey Results and Comment Themes

A total of 1,916 people answered at least one survey question for this R3 Bridge Type Selection survey, compared to a 6,827 for a project survey in 2020 and 830 in a 2019 survey. One possible explanation for the lower participation than in 2020 was that the 2020 survey sought input on a single recommended preferred alternative, while the 2021 survey sought input on a range of options.

The number of responses to individual questions varied because survey participants were able to answer as many or as few questions as they chose.



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QUESTION 1: For the WEST APPROACH SPAN, if you had to choose, which bridge type features would you prefer? (choose one from each category)

Overall Look and Feel

Options	Responses	Percentage
Above deck structure that matches on both the east and west approaches	1,263	76%
An uneven or unbalanced look that has above deck structure on the east but no above deck structure on the west	354	21%
Unsure (please explain)	50	3%

A total of 1,667 participants responded to this question. Top themes for the 3% who selected “Unsure” included:

- **Tradeoff between open views and an unbalanced look** – Comments from respondents who were undecided between the merits of more open views, but an unbalanced superstructure that come with the Girder option.
- **Retaining the historic bridge** – Comments in support of either keeping the current bridge or building a new bridge without a superstructure.

On and Under Bridge Experience

Options	Responses	Percentage
Structure above the bridge deck with a higher ceiling height under the bridge (Tied Arch, Cable Supported, Truss)	1,257	75%
Unobstructed views on the bridge with reduced vertical clearance under the bridge (Girder)	381	23%
Unsure (please explain)	37	2%

A total of 1,675 participants responded to this question. Top themes for the 2% who selected “Unsure” included:

- **Retaining the historic bridge** – Comments in support of either keeping the current bridge or building a new bridge without a superstructure.



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- **Need more information** – Comments asking for additional renderings of what the space under the bridge would feel like for the various options as well as what the difference in cost would be to help decide if the less expensive Girder option is worth the savings.

Cost and Construction

Options	Responses	Percentage
Look, feel and experience are more important to me than cost	1,068	64%
I'm willing to forego a certain look, feel and experience of the bridge if it is too expensive	547	33%
Unsure (please explain)	61	3%

A total of 1,676 participants responded to this question. Top themes for the 3% who selected “Unsure” included:

- **Depends on cost** – Comments asking for cost estimates of the various options to help determine the scale of potential savings.
- **Prioritize seismic resiliency** – Comments expressing that seismic resiliency should be the driving factor to determine bridge type.

QUESTION 2: For the MOVABLE SPAN, if you had to choose, what would you prefer?

Options	Responses	Percentage
Unobstructed views on the bridge with larger in-water piers (Bascule)	1199	71%
Vertical towers above the bridge deck with smaller in-water piers (Lift)	421	25%
Unsure (please explain)	57	4%

A total of 1,676 participants responded to this question. Top themes for the 4% who selected “Unsure” included:



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- **Depends on cost** – Comments asking for cost estimates of the various options to help determine the scale of potential savings.
- **Prioritize seismic resiliency** – Comments expressing that seismic resiliency should be the driving factor to determine bridge type.
- **Speed of operation** – Comments in favor of whichever movable span type will open and close more quickly and have the shortest impact on traffic crossing the bridge.

QUESTION 3: For the west, middle, and east sides, which bridge types and related features do you think do the best job of...

- Complementing or responding to the surrounding area and neighborhoods?
- Acknowledging the historic and natural surroundings?
- Presenting a seismically-resilient, modern design?
- Setting the tone for future development throughout its 100-year design life?

On the west side:

Options	Responses	Percentage
Cable Supported	627	37%
Tied Arch	602	35%
Girder	346	21%
Truss	59	3%
Unsure	54	3%

Respondents were asked to explain why they made their selection. Top themes for each option included:

Cable Supported:

- **Aesthetic preference** - Comments supporting the iconic, modern design of the Cable Supported option. Many respondents felt that this design would support the aesthetics of the city as it evolves over the lifetime of the bridge.
- **Clean sightlines** - Comments noting that the Cable Supported option provides cleaner sightlines than some of the other options while being minimally obtrusive to views of downtown or the east side.
- **Below-bridge experience** - Comments in support of more open space and vertical clearance in Waterfront Park under the bridge.



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Tied Arch:

- **Aesthetic preference** - Comments supporting the graceful design of the Tied Arch option. Many respondents felt that this design would provide better balance with other bridges and skylines on either side of the bridge than the Cable Supported and still be a forward-thinking design without being imposing or dominating.
- **Complements other bridges and provides variety** – Comments noting that a Tied Arch design would complement other nearby bridges and provide some more variety in bridge types. Many respondents felt that the Cable Supported option could feel like a copy of the Tilikum Bridge.
- **Below-bridge experience** - Comments in support of more open space and vertical clearance in Waterfront Park under the bridge, especially with the support columns being further west towards Naito Parkway.

Girder:

- **Open views of downtown** – Comments supporting open views and sightlines of and from downtown, in particular the Portland Oregon Sign. Several respondents noted that they were comfortable with and even preferred asymmetry in the superstructure.
- **Least expensive** – Comments in support of the Girder option because it is the least expensive option.
- **Historic look** – Comments noting that the Girder option provides the closest approximation to maintaining the look of the current Burnside Bridge which also preserves the look and feel of downtown and Old Town.

Truss:

- **Complements other bridges** – Comments noting that the industrial-style of a Truss design has a more historic feel when you take the surrounding bridges into consideration and would not overwhelm sitelines or cityscape.
- **Below-bridge experience** - Comments in support of more open space and vertical clearance in Waterfront Park under the bridge.

Unsure:

- **Undecided between Cable Supported and Tied Arch** – Comments from respondents who were equally drawn to the Cable Supported and Tied Arch options.
- **Construction cost and duration** – Comments in support of whichever bridge can be constructed the fastest and most economically.
- **Design that differentiates from other bridges** – Comments expressing a desire for a bridge type that is different from the existing Portland bridges.



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In the middle:

Options	Responses	Percentage
Bascule	1,169	69%
Lift	412	24%
Unsure	101	6%

Respondents were asked to explain why they made their selection. Top themes for each option included:

Bascule:

- **Open views and clean lines** – Comments in support of the unobstructed views and cleaner design afforded by the Bascule option, especially if there is a possibility of viewing platforms in the center of the bridge span.
- **Vertical river clearance** – Comments in support of the unrestricted vertical clearance for river traffic. Several respondents felt that this gives the bridge more flexibility to adapt to future changes.

Lift:

- **Adds to an iconic look** – Comments noting that the towers of a Lift span provide more opportunity for an iconic bridge design, especially when paired with the Cable Supported or Tied Arch options.
- **Less expensive** - Comments in support of the Lift option because it is less expensive than the Bascule.
- **Fewer in-water impacts** – Comments in support of a Lift option because the in-water supports would be smaller and therefore have fewer impacts to the natural habitats and aquatic species in the river.

Unsure:

- **Tradeoff between views and cost** – Comments from respondents who were torn between the open views of the Bascule and the cost effectiveness of a Lift.
- **Construction cost and duration** – Comments in support of whichever option can be constructed the fastest and most economically.



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On the east side:

Options	Responses	Percentage
Cable Supported	790	47%
Tied Arch	725	43%
Truss	83	5%
Unsure	81	5%

Respondents were asked to explain why they made their selection. Top themes for each option included:

Cable Supported:

- **Aesthetic preference** - Comments supporting the iconic, modern design of the Cable Supported option. Many respondents felt that this design would support the aesthetics of the city as it evolves over the lifetime of the bridge.
- **Symmetrical bridge design** - Comments in favor of a symmetrical and balanced design that complements the significant location of the bridge as the center of the city. Selection matched their preference for the west side.
- **Clean sightlines** – Comments noting that the Cable Supported option provides cleaner sightlines than some of the other options while being minimally obtrusive to views of downtown or the east side.

Tied Arch:

- **Aesthetic preference** – Comments supporting the graceful design of the Tied Arch option. Many respondents felt that this design would provide better balance with other bridges and skylines on either side of the bridge than the Cable Supported and still be a forward-thinking design without being imposing or dominating.
- **Symmetrical bridge design** - Comments in favor of a symmetrical and balanced design that complements the significant location of the bridge as the center of the city. Selection matched their preference for the west side.
- **Openness in Waterfront Park** – Comments in support of having more open space in Waterfront Park for Saturday Market and other activities by having the support columns closer to Naito Parkway.



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Truss:

- **Symmetrical bridge design** - Comments in favor of a symmetrical and balanced design that complements the significant location of the bridge as the center of the city. Selection matched their preference for the west side. Some respondents felt that the Truss option would provide more symmetry than the Cable Supported or Tied Arch.
- **Historic design** – Comments noting that a Truss design would provide the most cohesive look across all the other existing Portland bridges. Some also felt that this design had the most historic look.

Unsure:

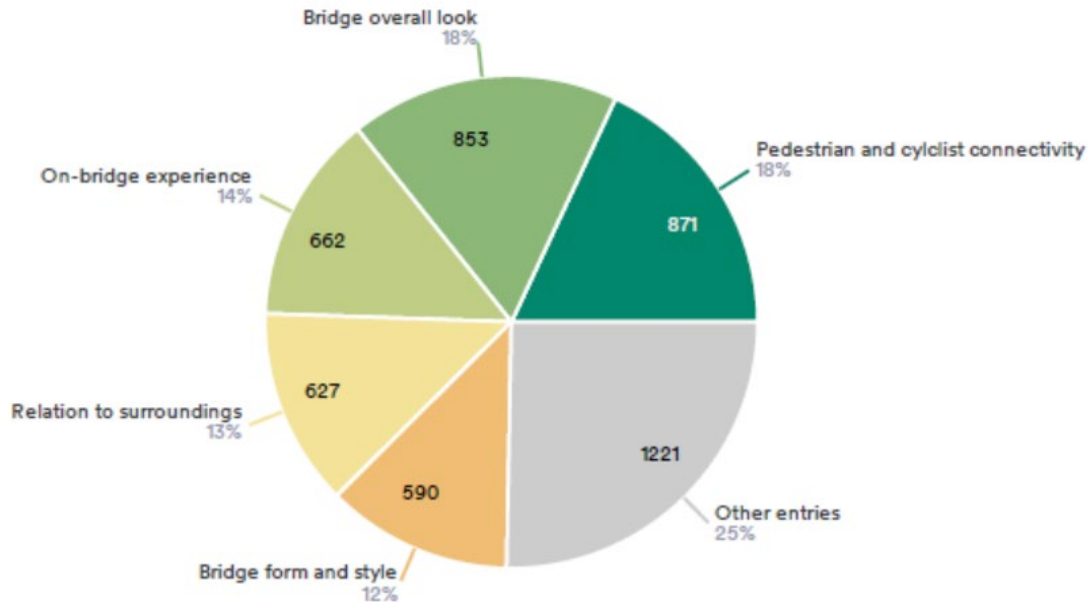
- **Construction cost and duration** – Comments in support of whichever bridge can be constructed the fastest and most economically.
- **Design that differentiates from other bridges** – Comments expressing a desire for a bridge type that is different from the existing Portland bridges.

QUESTION 4: Is there anything else you would like to share about the range of bridge types?

Top themes from the 628 comments received for this question included:

- **Complement the existing Portland bridges and cityscape** - Comments in support of a bridge design that matches the scale and general aesthetic of the nearby Willamette River bridges (Morrison, Steel, et. al) and fits well with the existing Portland cityscape. Many comments strongly recommended preserving the existing views of downtown Portland, especially the Portland Oregon Sign.
- **Symmetrical bridge design** - Comments in favor of a symmetrical and balanced design that complements the significant location of the bridge as the center of the city.
- **Support for a “unique” design** - Comments in favor of a bridge design that would stand out from the other bridges along the Willamette River. Several comments also expressed a strong desire for a bridge that would be a symbol of Portland and that would inspire civic pride among residents.
- **Funding and cost concerns** - Comments that expressed strong concerns about the total cost of the project and securing enough funds to pay for the project.

QUESTION 5: Of the topics for evaluating the options, which are most important to you? (Select your top three.)



QUESTION 6: Do the topics for evaluating the bridge type options make sense?

Options	Responses	Percentage
Yes	1,599	96%
No. Why not?	62	4%

A total of 1,661 participants responded to this question.

Top themes for the 4% who selected “No” included:

- **Seismic resiliency and safety** – Comments expressing the importance of having a bridge that is going to provide the highest levels of seismic resiliency and safety for users in the event of an earthquake.
- **Construction cost/duration and long-term maintenance** – Comments prioritizing options with a lower cost and duration of construction as well as the cost associated with long-term maintenance.



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QUESTION 7: What other topics should we consider when studying the tradeoffs among the options?

Top themes from the 616 comments received for this question included:

- **Aesthetically pleasing design** – Comments in support of a new bridge design or sharing a preference for a bridge that is visually appealing. Many respondents were excited about the opportunity to create a visually striking bridge that could increase tourism.
- **Prioritizing active transportation and transit** – Comments expressing the importance of prioritizing accessibility, bicyclists, pedestrians, and public transit including praise for separate and protected bike lanes and sidewalks.
- **Construction cost/duration and long-term maintenance** – Comments prioritizing options with a lower cost and duration of construction as well as the cost associated with long-term maintenance.
- **Seismic resiliency and safety** – Comments expressing the importance of having a bridge that is going to provide the highest levels of seismic resiliency and safety for users in the event of an earthquake.

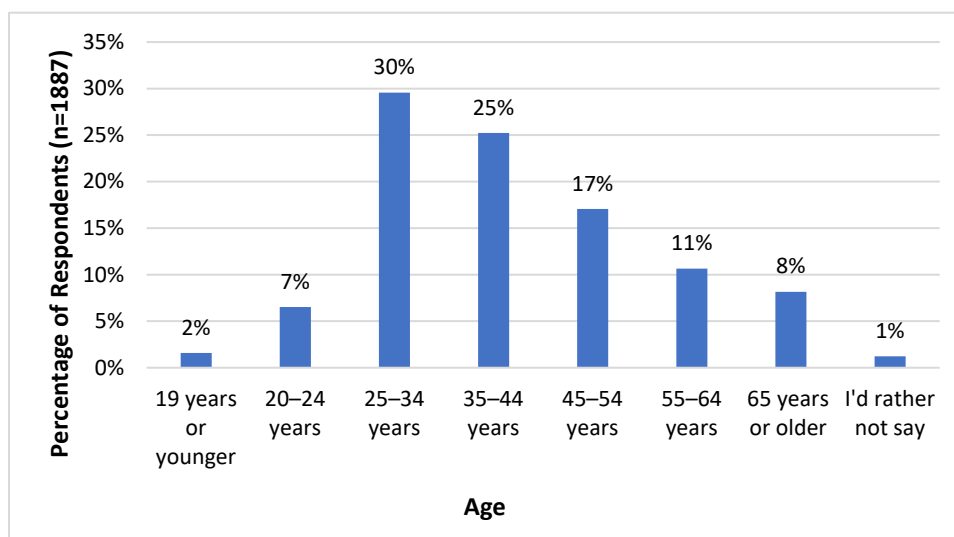
QUESTION 8 (survey evaluation): What do you think about the amount of information presented in this survey?

Options	Responses	Percentage
The right amount	1,318	88%
Too little	111	7%
Too much	60	4%

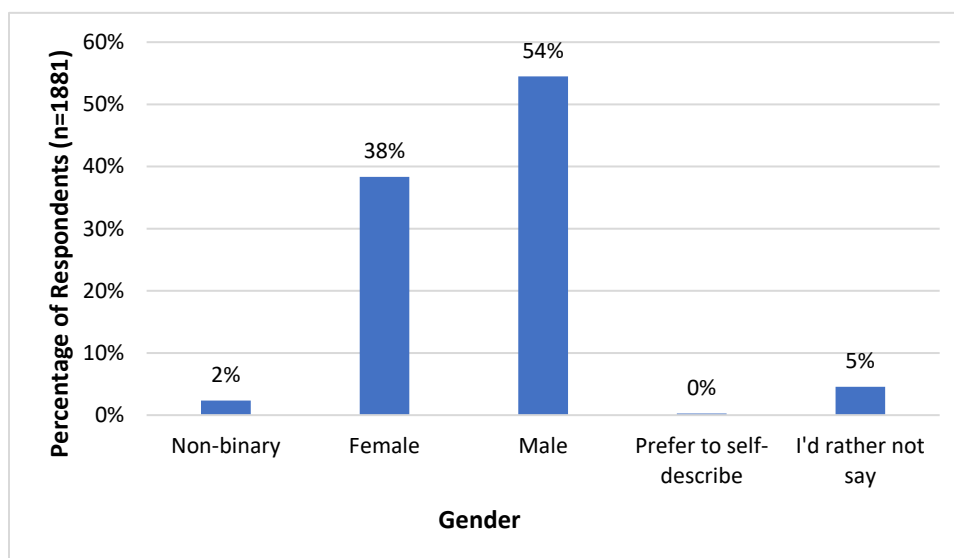
Who We Heard From

Demographic questions were included in the online survey to better understand the input provided, identify the demographic groups reached through engagement activities, and to adjust future public participation planning for the project. Graphs include responses provided across all seven languages.

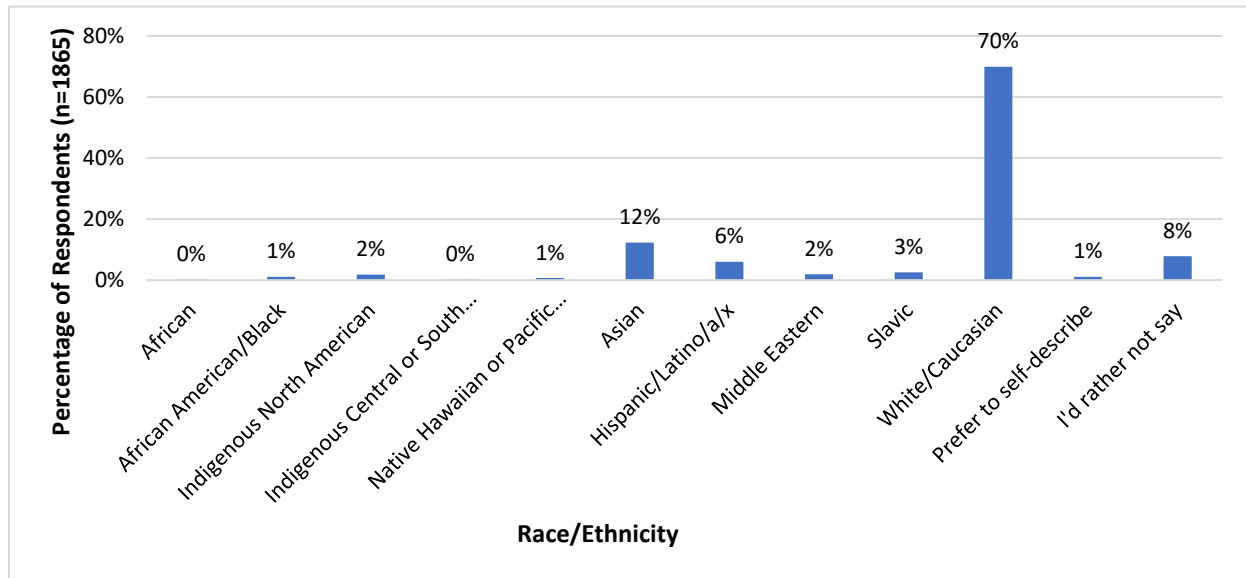
What is your age?



Which gender do you most identify with?

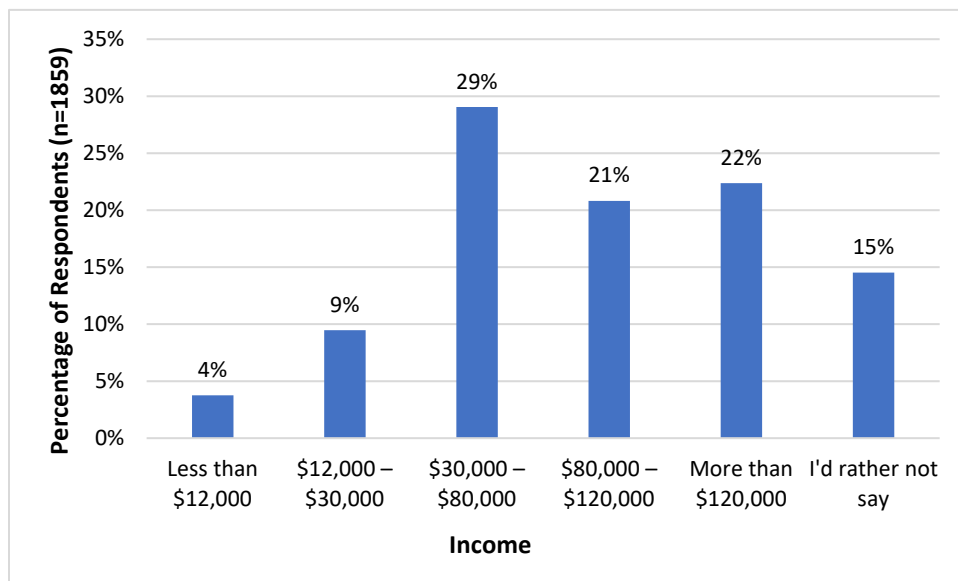


What race/ethnicity best describes you?



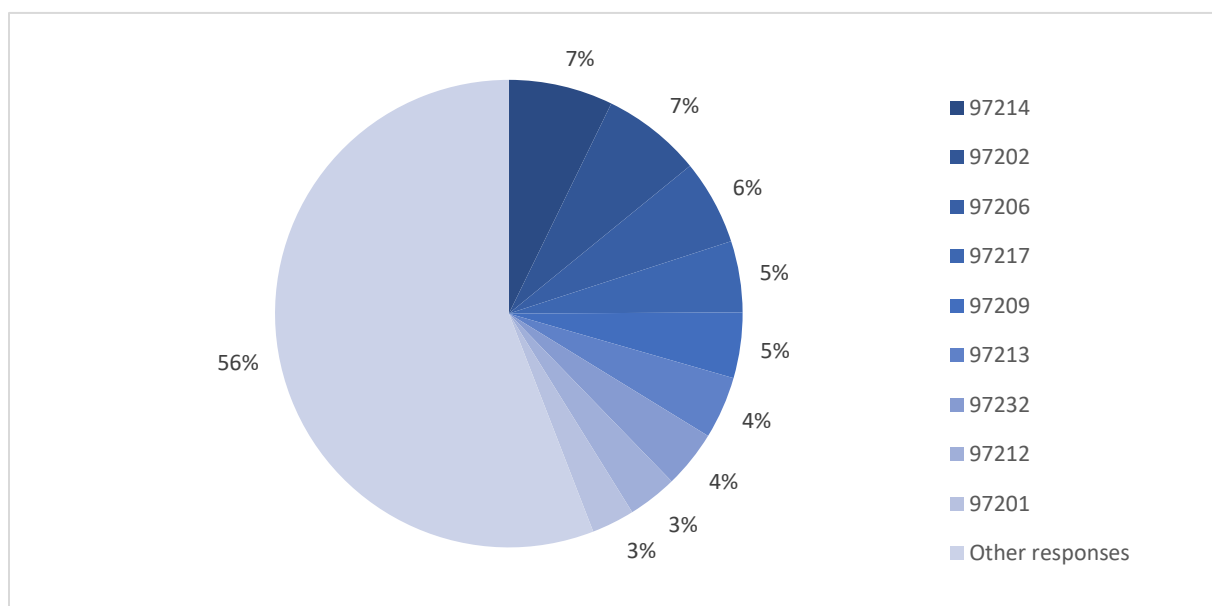
Percentages add up to more than 100% because respondents were able to select more than one option.

What is your household income?



Reported household incomes of survey respondents are shown. For comparison, the median household income of Multnomah County residents was \$60,369 (2013-2017 ACS).

What is your zip code?



Majority of survey respondents that provided their zip code live in Multnomah County.

Media and Notifications

Purpose

APPROACH TO MEDIA COVERAGE

The approach to notify the public about the online open house and survey was to use project-led social media posts and paid ads, e-newsletters, emails and news releases to promote the input opportunity. These efforts were then bolstered by external outlets like elected officials' e-newsletters and news media. Traditional media coverage was lower than previous rounds of engagement, so the team added an additional Facebook paid ad set to target a broader audience. This resulted in an additional 2,200 users visiting the online open house for the second half of the outreach period.

5 Media stories

186,000 Social media impressions

11 News releases and e-newsletters
(from project team and others)

3,183 Project E-newsletter recipients

120 Text message recipients

2,216 YouTube video views

2 Banners over the Burnside Bridge



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With this approach, a majority of the online open house traffic came from media and notifications. Specifically, social media drove 44 percent of online open house traffic. Overall, media and notifications drove a large portion of survey responses with 29 percent of survey respondents saying that they heard about the online open house through news media and Facebook.

Specifically, Multnomah County notified members of the public about the online open house by using:

- The project website
- Social media advertising, including organic and paid posts
- Targeted emails to project stakeholder groups (such as project committees, community neighborhood and business organizations and agency partners) encouraging them to re-share information about the input opportunity
- E-newsletters (2)
- News releases (2)
- Banners on the Burnside Bridge (2)
- Multnomah County Commissioners' e-newsletters (4)
- Multnomah County Wednesday Wire employee e-newsletter (2)

Highlights

MEDIA COVERAGE

Traditional media has a broad reach, but this outreach round saw fewer news stories than the previous outreach in August 2020. The last round of outreach concerned a recommended Preferred Alternative, while this outreach introduced four bridge types. Once the project has a recommended bridge type for the public, then outreach participation and media coverage are expected to increase. Furthermore, during the outreach period there were many other events to report on at the national and local level, so there was not as much interest from local news organizations. For those media outlets that did report on the Type Selection outreach, the coverage was informative and saw positive engagement for the current project stage.



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FACEBOOK CAMPAIGN

As engagement opportunities continue to be virtual due to COVID-19, advertising on Facebook was crucial to share the online open house with a wider audience. The paid Facebook campaign began with one audience and three ads which targeted those interested in the Multnomah County Facebook page. Halfway through the outreach, with the lack of news coverage, the team looked to other platforms to broaden the reach and engagement of the online open house. Therefore, the project increased the paid campaign spending and added another broader audience to target, ultimately reaching 70,000 more Portland residents.

- The campaign reached **104,832 unique users** and generated **4,275 clicks** to the website.
- The **cost per click was \$0.19**. Looking at industry standards for industrial services, the benchmark is \$2.14. One possible reason for the low cost could be relevant and engaging content. (source: <https://instapage.com/blog/facebook-advertising-benchmarks>)
- The strongest performing ad was the **30 second 360/VR video**. Facebook optimizes for video so adding a video to the ad set broadened the outreach's awareness



ORGANIC SOCIAL MEDIA

- Throughout the Bridge Type Selection outreach, Multnomah County's social media channels posted six posts promoting the online open house. These posts generated over 53,774 impressions and over 384 site clicks. Awareness is generally the primary goal of organic posts, and traffic is secondary. Comparing Facebook performance with Twitter, the first Facebook post saw the highest engagement while the tweets promoting the webinar performed the strongest on Twitter. These analytics align with the purposes of the individual platform with new engagement performing strong on Facebook then tapering off with additional posts. Whereas, Twitter performs the best with timely content like an event promotion. In summation, organic content continues to be a beneficial and cost-effective way to promote the project and input opportunities.

