

Willamette River Bridges CIP

Comments Summary



Overview:

Multnomah County held a comment period for the release of the draft Willamette River Bridges Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) in February 2015. Two Summit Meetings were held on Thursday, February 12 in the Multnomah Building, Room 315, the same day as a public briefing on the CIP was held for the Board of County Commissioners. An Agency meeting took place from 3:00 - 4:00 p.m. and a Community meeting took place from 6:00 – 7:00 p.m. These were followed by an online survey that was posted to the project website (<https://multco.us/bridgeplan>) from February 12-26. Emails with CIP comments were received by County staff during this time as well.

The purpose of the comment period was to provide stakeholders and the public with an overview of the CIP development and draft plan and obtain feedback about the final draft document. A total of five people attended the Summit Meetings – three agencies (ODOT, PBOT and Portland Police Bureau (PPB)) and two members of the public – and 57 online comments were received (surveys and emails). This document summarizes the results of that feedback. For additional information about specific comments received, contact Mike Pullen, Multnomah County Communications Office, 503-209-4111 or mike.j.pullen@multco.us.

What Did We Hear?

While physical attendance at the Summit Meetings was low and only one comment form was turned in, web-based participation included 47 online survey comments and 10 emailed comments to Multnomah County staff. The total number of comments received for this comment period was 58.

The comment form and online survey featured a single, open-ended question to receive feedback about the Draft Willamette River Bridges CIP (which was made public February 12th).

- *Do you have any comments, concerns or suggestions for the Draft Willamette River Bridges CIP?*

Most of the Draft CIP feedback concerned potential improvements for bicyclists and pedestrians. Many suggested providing wider, separated and/or buffered bike lanes for all or most of the downtown bridges. Bike connections on and off the bridges were cited as poor and/or dangerous and a desire to assess and improve these transitions as part of the CIP was strongly encouraged. A desire for designated pedestrian paths, specifically separated from bike paths and with better accessibility, was the second most common theme. Overall, participants made note that the number of Portland-area active transportation users is rising and that future plans to upgrade or replace any bridges should take this into consideration as the CIP projects move forward.

Generally, people were supportive of upgrading or retrofitting the bridges to be seismically sound, however efficient use of public funds was a concern, as well as having a seismic response action plan in place as an additional safety measure. A few comments concerning the Steel Bridge were received and those will be forwarded to Union Pacific Railroad, which owns that structure.

Many of the comments received came with recommendations for improvements, several with specific locations and movements identified. The majority of these suggestions were related to bike improvements.

Note: In response to this feedback, Multnomah County has added two additional projects (bundles) to the list of Bridge CIP projects identified in the Draft Bridge CIP: 1) A system-wide planning study for the bicycle/pedestrian network for the four County-owned downtown Portland bridges (Broadway, Burnside, Hawthorne, Morrison); and 2) A construction implementation plan for any viable project(s) that emerge from that planning study. The Planning work will commence in the 2020-2025 timeframe, and the Construction will commence in the 2026-2031 timeframe.

Summit Meetings

Project Team Participants:		
Mike Pullen – Mult. Co.	Alex Cousins – HDR	Mike Baker – DEA
Ian Cannon – Mult. Co.	Steve Drahota – HDR	Doug Lampkin – DEA
Joanna Valencia – Mult. Co.		
Brian Vincent – Mult. Co.		

Mike Pullen welcomed meeting participants and facilitated Q&A. Both Summit Meetings featured the same overview PowerPoint presentation given by Mike Baker.

Highlights of the presentation included:

- Draft CIP development/methodology
- Review of Seismic Upgrade Options 1, 2, 3
- 53 capital projects are listed with a total cost of approximately \$1.3 billion.
- Projects are scheduled in five-year increments based on factors including cost of inaction, direct capital cost, urgency of need, and benefits.
- The costliest project is a rehabilitation/replacement of the Burnside Bridge in 2025-2029. The bridge is a designated lifeline route but is vulnerable in a major earthquake. The project is estimated to cost \$496 million in 2027 dollars.

General Discussion/Q&A - Agencies

PPB: Is the Burnside cost so high (\$543M) because the improvement is so large? Would the other bridges cost similarly for a large seismic retrofit or replacement?

A: Short answer is yes.

ODOT: What is the assumed source of funds? Is there a funding plan in place?

A: \$3M has been programmed for the Burnside Bridge feasibility study and \$30M is secured for a rehabilitation of some components of the bridge in the next few years. There is no funding plan in place yet for the larger program of work, which would likely include local, state and federal dollars. The County expects to develop a funding plan for Burnside after the feasibility study.

ODOT: My understanding is that federal funding is going to get tighter and more competitive.

PBOT: Did the Board of County Commissioners vote today to choose Option 3?

A: It was not a vote but a briefing on a recommendation only. The BOCC will consider adopting the plan as part of the county's overall transportation capital plan during the annual budget process in May.

PBOT: Are any of these projects in the STIP (Statewide Transportation Improvement Plan)?

A: No, but the current legislative session is good timing to be talking about a transportation funding package.

PPB: How large of an earthquake could the bridges stand right now?

A: Any large seismic event would be impactful.

PPB: What magnitude earthquake might require closing a bridge before it could be inspected?

A: Pretty much any earthquake that could be felt; it's not just the magnitude but the location of the quake and the duration of the shaking.

PBOT: The estimated replacement cost for Burnside, is that for the structure itself or the approaches also? Are any of the costs assumed for the City?

A: The extent of the County's jurisdiction goes to the nearest at-grade intersection and the costs are included to that point.

General Discussion/Q&A - Community

Q: These bridges were built a long time ago with limited knowledge of earthquakes and seismicity. Is a seismic retrofit even realistic? Wouldn't you just be better off replacing the bridge? Seems like there would be a lot of assumptions (guesswork) around the retrofit that you wouldn't have with a new bridge.

A: A feasibility study will answer these questions. That is the next step for the Burnside Bridge. It's true that a new bridge is the easiest way to ensure that the bridge will survive a major seismic event.

Q: Have there been instances of a major, old retrofitted bridge surviving a large earthquake and then being tested for how well it held up?

A: Yes, there are successful examples where this occurred, including in Washington state.

Q: Which one is more likely to survive at similar cost, a retrofit or a modern bridge?

A: Both are survivable, but a modern replacement may be better than trying to save an old bridge if costs are relative.

Online Comments (Survey and emails)

47 survey forms were completed, with an additional 10 emailed comments sent to County staff. These comments are summarized below by theme:

Bikes (34)

- Desire for separated, widened and/or buffered bike lanes
- Improved bike connections on/off bridges (better and safer)
- Increased safety

Pedestrians (13)

- Desire for separated and/or widened pedestrian paths
- Better overall access
- Increased safety

Seismic – concerns and integrity (7)

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- Retrofit, upgrade and/or rebuild for seismic resiliency
- Implementation of seismic response / action plan

Project Costs – bridge improvement costs and use of taxpayer money (5)

- What are the costs to retrofit/upgrade?
- How cost effective and efficient is the plan?

ADA – accessibility/improvements (3)

- Desire to improve ADA accessibility

Miscellaneous comments

- Vehicle lane reduction to accommodate active transportation
- Expand active transportation capacity
- Create bus-only lanes
- Environmental impacts and mitigation/plan for climate change
- Potential impacts to Waterfront Park and Burnside Skate Park
- Coordination with affected public agencies
- Rail – hazardous materials transport
- Misc. recommendations

The bridges most frequently identified with concerns and recommendations are as follows (in order of frequency):

- 1.) Burnside
- 2.) Hawthorne
- 3.) Morrison
- 4.) Broadway
- 5.) Steel (not a County bridge)

Survey Demographics:

Age:

Of the total number of individuals that responded and provided their age, the group with the highest number of responses was 27-35.

18-26	27-35	36-45	46-55	56-64	65+
2	16	10	5	4	1

Gender:

Of the total number of individuals that responded and provided their sex, males had the highest number of responses.

Male	Female
33	4

Language:

The predominant language spoken amongst individuals that provided comments was English.

English	Spanish	Russian	Vietnamese	Chinese	Other
38	-	-	-	1	-

Ethnicity:

The ethnicity with the highest level of participation in this survey was Caucasian.

African-American	American Indian or Alaska Native	Asian or Pacific Islander	Caucasian	Hispanic	Other
	-	2	33	-	-