



Multnomah County is creating an earthquake-ready downtown river crossing.

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JUNE 14, 2021

Community Task Force (CTF) Meeting #25

Meeting Information

Project: Earthquake Ready Burnside Bridge

Subject: CTF, Meeting #25

Date: Monday, June 14, 2021

Time: 6:00 to 8:00 p.m.

Location: WebEx Video Conference Call and Livestream

Attendees:

CTF Members:

Amy Rathfelder, Portland Business Alliance
Art Graves, MultCo Bike and Pedestrian Citizen Advisory Committee
Dennis Corwin, Portland Spirit
Ed Wortman, Community Member
Frederick "Fred" Cooper, Laurelhurst Neighborhood Emergency Team and Laurelhurst Neighborhood Association
Gabe Rahe, Burnside Skatepark
Howie Bierbaum, Portland Saturday Market
Jackie Tate, Community Member
Jane Gordon, University of Oregon
Jennifer Stein, Central City Concern
Neil Jensen, Gresham Area Chamber of Commerce
Paul Leitman, Oregon Walks
Peter Finley Fry, Central Eastside Industrial Council
Sharon Wood Wortman, Community Member
Stella Funk Butler, Coalition of Gresham Neighborhood Associations
Susan Lindsay, Buckman Community Association
Tesia Eisenberg, Mercy Corps
William "Bill" Burgel, Portland Freight Committee

Project Team Members:

Megan Neill, Multnomah County
Mike Pullen, Multnomah County
Heather Catron, HDR
Steve Drahota, HDR
Liz Stoppelmann, HDR
Cassie Davis, CDavis Consulting
Allison Brown, JLA
Sarah Omlor, EnviroIssues
Jon Henrichsen, Multnomah County

Apologies: Marie Dodds





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Summary Notes

This online virtual meeting was held over WebEx and livestreamed to the public via Vbrick. Seven public attendees logged in to view the livestream. A recording of this meeting is available on the [Committee Meeting Materials](#) page on the project website.

This summary includes the nature and dialogue of the meeting, including questions and comments submitted by CTF members through the WebEx chat function.

WELCOME, INTRODUCTIONS AND HOUSEKEEPING

Allison Brown, JLA, welcomed everyone to the meeting, reviewed the agenda and took roll call. She announced that Peter Englander, Old Town Community Association, has retired and will no longer be a CTF member. No one had been appointed yet to represent Old Town Community Association in his place.

PUBLIC COMMENT

In advance of the meeting, the public was invited to submit comments to the CTF. No comments were received.

PROJECT UPDATE

Allison introduced Jon Henrichsen, Director of Multnomah County Transportation Division, who provided insight into the project's recent pivot to focus on cost saving measures and securing funding. Jon thanked the CTF for all of their work on the project to date, continuing to work throughout the pandemic, and for recommending a Preferred Alternative. He assured them that the County is committed to supporting the Preferred Alternative and seeing it through to construction. He noted that the County is particularly glad the recommended option is also the lowest cost option.

Jon recapped the County's decision to shift the project scope to focus on securing funding at this time. He explained that the 2020 regional transportation measure would have contributed about \$150 million towards the construction phase and provided strong momentum to secure the remaining funding. When the measure didn't pass, the County decided that the highest projections for project cost, approaching \$1 billion, was more than the County could reasonably expect to raise or afford. The County currently has \$300 million allocated towards the project through the Vehicle Registration Fee (VRF). In order to secure the remaining two thirds of the expected project cost, the project will:

1. Add time to the project schedule to evaluate cost saving ideas. The goal is to reduce the cost without sacrificing the core purpose of the project; to build an earthquake ready crossing. About nine months will be added to the schedule which will push construction out by about one year.



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2. Increase the effort to secure outside funding. Many members of the team are now working on federal grant applications, talking with local elected officials, and pursuing other relevant funding options.

Jon explained this additional time is worth it because it will greatly increase the chances of the project getting built. He assured the group that the current cost saving ideas would be explained in more detail later in the meeting.

- Susan Lindsay, Buckman Community Association, asked what the County's total approved cost is.
 - Jon said there is not an exact limit yet, but he estimates it will be no more than \$800 million.

Heather Catron, HDR, added that the project team is tracking the Federal Transportation and Infrastructure Package, applying for a Federal RAISE Grant, and following conversations about a potential future regional transportation bond measure. She shared that an independent cost review is currently being conducted. An official cost cap will be shared after the review is completed.

- Howie Bierbaum, Portland Saturday Market, asked how much money the VRF is expected to contribute and if there's a possibility that it will be increased.
 - Heather said it's expected to bring in \$300 million.
 - Mike Pullen, Multnomah County, explained that the expected funding from the VRF is based on the revenue it will bring in each year. That allows the County to bond the estimated amount of \$300 million which would then be paid off with VRF revenue over many years.
 - Gabe Rahe, Burnside Skatepark, clarified that the annual VRF revenue is actually much less than \$300 million.
 - Mike confirmed explaining that the \$300 million is essentially a loan that will be paid off with interest using the annual VRF revenue. Similar to the process of a mortgage loan.
- Paul Leitman, Oregon Walks, asked if there are any grant programs for capital transportation projects set up as part of Oregon's transportation bill passed by the legislature in 2017 or 2018.
 - Heather said no, not for this type of project.

COST SAVING MEASURES UNDER ANALYSIS

Megan Neil, Multnomah County, shared the project's guiding principles as they have considered cost saving measures:

- Moving forward with recommended Long Span Replacement Alternative
- Ensure the Purpose and Need is met
 - Seismic resiliency



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- Emergency response and regional recovery
- Long term transportation needs
- Maintain County's equity lens
- Fiscal responsibility

Megan clarified that the project will not be backtracking to consider other alternatives, but rather refining the current choice. The high level measures that are being considered for cost reduction are:

1. Bridge-specific Changes
 - a. Bridge Types
 - b. Bridge Width
 - c. Approach Span Lengths
2. Property Impacts / ROW Acquisition
3. Connections to Skidmore MAX Station and Eastbank Esplanade
4. Aesthetic Enhancements
5. Delivery Method

Megan explained that delivery methods being investigated includes the CMGC (Construction Manager / General Contractor) model instead of a classic Design-Bid-Build method. CMGC's are generally thought to save money in the long run by including the contractor in the design process but do cost more money upfront. The team is testing this idea to see if it would actually save substantial money overall.

Megan reviewed the cost saving measures that will **not** be pursued:

- Reduce seismic design criteria
- Eliminate potential for future Streetcar
- Reduce to three vehicular lanes
- Eliminate capacity for oversized and specialized heavy haul vehicles
- Reduce bike/ped width to less than 14-feet
- Remove the crash worthy barrier between vehicular lanes

Gabe asked how wide the current bike and pedestrian facilities were.

- Steve said that it was 14.8 feet including the candlestick barriers and 12.8 without the candlesticks.

Review range of cost saving options being considered

Steve Drahota, HDR, presented the options currently being considered to reduce project cost. He noted that cost estimates for the various measures are still preliminary and will go through more rigorous analysis before anything is decided. Feedback from the CTF will be considered as well.



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WEST APPROACH BRIDGE TYPE

The first cost-saving option being considered is building a girder type with two support columns in Waterfront Park on the west approach of the bridge. The girder type that was discussed at previous CTF meetings only had one row of support columns in Waterfront Park and would have lowered the clearance over the park to about 17 feet. The updated girder would have two sets of support columns and would increase the existing vertical and horizontal clearance in a portion of the park. It would also have fewer columns than existing conditions. This option has the potential to save \$5-10 million.

In March, the project team asked for feedback on this option from the Joint Historic Landmarks and Design Commissions. They shared the following comments and advice:

- Due to visual impacts to historic districts, Girder-styled west approach option best meets zoning code and historic guidelines
- Bascule movable bridge option minimizes impacts to views
- Cable Supported option offers similar scale and visual cohesion to east side building heights
- Cable Supported option offers more transparency
- Preference for “observable asymmetry” due to distinct differences in urban fabric on west and east sides

CROSS SECTION

The next option is reducing the width of the bridge. This option offers the best opportunity to reduce cost. The cross section included in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) would have increased the width of the bridge from the current 86 feet up to about 110 feet over the midspan of the river. Reducing width means going from five vehicle lanes in the DEIS cross section down to four. Bicycle and pedestrian facilities would go from 20 feet wide to 14 feet wide in each direction. A crash worthy barrier between the bike lane and the vehicles lanes would still be maintained. This option is estimated to save \$140-165 million.

Steve explained that there are several ways to allocate the space available within the narrower bridge option. For example, vehicle lanes could be slightly narrowed from 11 feet to 10 or 10.5 feet and have the extra space reallocated to the bike and pedestrian paths.

There are also several options around how to configure the four traffic lanes as shown on slide 18 of the presentation.

Option 1 includes two westbound and two eastbound vehicle lanes. One of the eastbound lanes would be a bus-only lane. This is true of all the options.

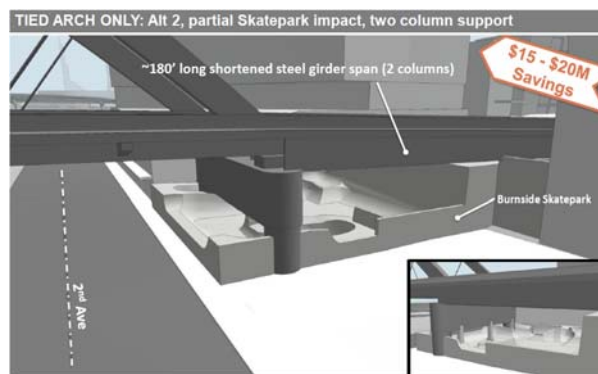
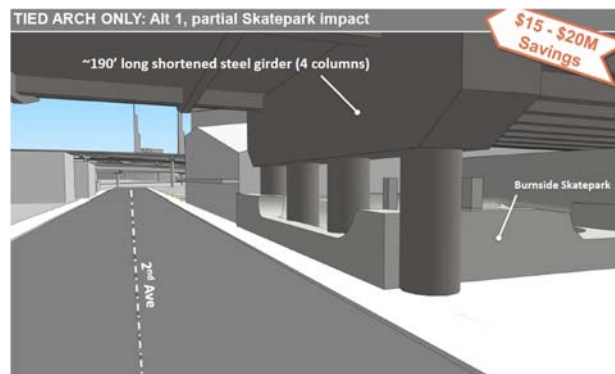
Option 2 has an eastbound focus. It would have one westbound lane and three eastbound lanes. This is the same configuration that was temporarily used during the recent two-year Burnside Bridge maintenance project (minus the bus-only eastbound lane). This option is feasible because there is much more traffic going eastbound in the evening than there is going westbound in the morning. Traffic volumes over the bridge are not projected to increase very much over the next 20 years.

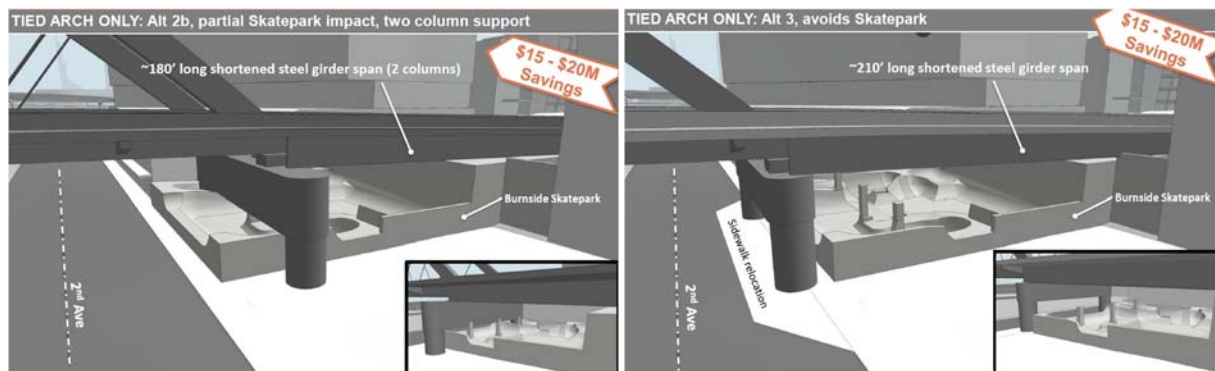
Option 3 would have one westbound lane, two eastbound lanes, and a reversible center lane in-between to allow an additional lane of traffic in a particular direction during peak hours. Steve said this option would be ideal as long the engineering issues can be worked out. The biggest challenge is making a reversible lane operationally safe so it is clear which way traffic is moving at a particular time without adding permanent barriers.

SKATEPARK COLUMN RELOCATION

The next cost-saving measure is to relocate eastside approach columns in the area of the Skatepark. This option only applies to a tied arch bridge type, not the cable stayed option. Relocating the columns would move them outside of the geotechnical hazard zone and eliminate the need for expensive groundwork. This option could save \$15-20 million.

There are three general alternatives for the placement of the columns. Option 1 would place four columns directly in the west portion of the Skatepark, making it partially unusable. Option 2 would place two columns in the vicinity of the Skatepark with the possibility of shifting one just south of the Skatepark. This option may require additional right of way acquisition of some of the parking area just south of the Skatepark. Option 3 would place the supports just to the west of the Skatepark in the current sidewalk area. This would avoid impacts to the Skatepark, but would require a sidewalk relocation that would encroach into 2nd Ave. The project team will continue studying all of these options.





PROPERTY IMPACT/ROW

Another option is reassessing the need to acquire a piece of land on the east approach in service of the future streetcar. Since the bridge itself will be built to be streetcar ready per the City’s 30-year Master Plan, the project needs to ensure the bridge deck is strong enough to accommodate future streetcar tracks and load. An initial assumption was that the project would also acquire a piece of private property that is part of the Sideyard that would allow the future streetcar to more easily maneuver through the Couch Street “S” curve. This falls outside of the technical requirements of the project and would save about \$5-10 million if the project does not acquire this section of land.

CONNECTIONS TO SKIDMORE MAX STATION AND EASTBANK ESPLANADE

The County has committed to funding an option to connect the bridge to the Skidmore MAX Station and the Eastbank Esplanade while meeting ADA requirements. There are many options including ramps, elevators, and stairs. The County is open to other agency contributions to build something beyond the most cost-effective option.

Steve summarized that all of the cost saving items add up to a total possible savings of \$175 - \$220 million. An independent cost estimate review that includes contractor estimates will be completed over the summer.

Open discussion and questions

- Art Graves, Multnomah County Bike and Pedestrian Citizen Advisory Committee, asked where the future streetcar lane would be in the cross-section drawings.
 - Steve said the streetcar lane would be in the outside-most lanes in each direction.
- Dennis Corwin, Portland Spirit, asked if the bus lane allows cars.
 - Mike answered that the bus lane would be the same as the current bus lane which does not allow cars. He added that freight interest groups have asked for the bus lane to allow freight trucks as well, but it currently only allows buses.



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- Jackie Tate, Community Member, asked if the reversible lane could be the bus only lane since the bus drivers are professional drivers and less likely to mistake the direction of travel.
 - Steve made a note of this suggestion and said he would bring it up with the traffic focus group.
- Gabe asked if the right-of-way acquisition for the streetcar is air space or building space.
 - Steve said it's an outdoor extension of sidewalk space. The building owners have considered using it for outdoor seating or entertainment space.
- Gabe asked if there could be an eastside connection by street.
 - Steve said they are currently looking at "point A" being the bridge and "point B" being the Esplanade but if there are other options that are cost-effective, the EQRB Project team would be happy to look at them. He said generally speaking, extending ramp length isn't cost effective.
- Gabe asked why the support pillars can't be placed in the space between the Skatepark and the Yard building to the north of it.
 - Steve explained the proximity to the building is too close for a 12-foot diameter shaft.
 - Gabe thanked Steve and the team for their work in studying multiple options to try to work around impacting the Skatepark.
- Bill Burgel, Portland Freight Committee, asked for more information around relocating the eastside columns and placing below-ground elements during active railroad track conditions.
 - Steve explained that the new bridge supports would be constructed away from the UPRR right of way. The geotechnical mitigation for columns would be placed between the railroad tracks and 2nd Avenue, which means creating underground zones of strengthened soil that are about 100 feet deep and 100 feet wide. This requires pumping concrete into the ground to change the composition of the soil around the supports so it doesn't liquify during an earthquake. Excavation is not an option because of how deep the work needs to go.
 - Bill noted that there might be some relevant examples of similar work in Reno.
- Fred Cooper, Laurelhurst Neighborhood Emergency Team and Laurelhurst Neighborhood Association, noted that a 6-foot bike lane is not realistic because it's very uncomfortable to ride a bike where your handlebars are almost touching the barrier. He suggested that a 2-foot buffer of "shy" distance be kept in mind. He also asked if the combined bike and pedestrian space would be the same elevation or if the sidewalk would be raised. He thought that having it be the same elevation would be preferable.



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- Steve said the intent is to keep the bike and pedestrian space the same elevation because an additional step can be a safety issue for pedestrians and bikes. It also allows for greater flexibility for future uses.
- Fred supported differentiating the bike and pedestrian spaces by painting the bike lane green. He also asked if there is a possibility to include belvederes or observation decks by widening the support piers so people can stop and enjoy the view without impeding the flow of other travelers.
- Steve said moveable bridges provide natural places to provide belvederes because of the location of piers. He said this is an inexpensive way to increase safety and noted the Tilikum Bridge includes something similar.
- Fred said he liked the cross-section option #2 with the single westbound lane, but noted that it created a back-up in morning peak hours onto Couch St. and MLK Blvd. during the maintenance project. He suggested restricting left turns at Grand Ave. and 11th Ave. to help prevent this.
- Susan expressed concern for losing a traffic lane by reducing the bridge width. She was concerned that this option could cause a loss in public support for the project.
 - Steve recognized that there are several tradeoffs with removing a lane and noted that there is still a lot of analysis to be done, including how much traffic might shift to other bridges. Reducing the overall bridge width comes with the biggest cost savings and makes it that much more likely that a new bridge will actually be built.
 - Mike agreed that this was something to think about. He shared that the one westbound and two eastbound lanes was the same configuration that the bridge had during the maintenance project and the public adapted to that fairly well.
- Gabe asked if making a bus only lane into a multi-use lane is an option.
 - Steve said this was studied early on in the project and it was very important to the City of Portland and TriMet to keep it as a bus only lane.
 - Susan agreed with Gabe that the bus lane should be multi-use to keep public support for the bridge since the public is funding the bridge via the vehicle registration fee. She said having one lane westbound seems short sighted.
 - Paul noted that buses carry more people than a single car so when the City prioritizes capacity, bus lanes are much more effective in moving people.
 - Mike appreciated Susan thinking of public support and noted that they are studying the reversible lane in hopes of making a five-lane bridge.
- Jennifer Stein, Central City Concern, agreed with Fred's comment about painted bike lanes to prevent pedestrians from meandering into bike space. She shared that as a bike commuter this happens often. She asked how painted lanes would be handled by the project.



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- Steve said this would be a decision to be resolved in final design, but there is a lot of public support for painted lanes.
- Dennis agreed with Susan on the downfalls of having one westbound lane. He noted if there was an accident in the westbound direction there wouldn't be room to get around it. He asked if it's possible to combine the bike and ped space onto one side of the bridge to conserve width instead of removing a vehicle lane.
 - Steve said this option has been studied but it isn't feasible because it would require a lot of reconfiguration on the approaches for the sidewalks and bike to connect to the City's street network on either side of the bridge.
- Dennis asked about having the bike and pedestrian space above or below the vehicle lanes, similar to the Steel bridge.
 - Steve doubted there could be any cost savings there because of the movable span.
- Fred asked how the clearances for a west approach girder type were increased. He noted the CTF spent a lot of time talking about how undesirable it was. The updated option makes it more palatable because it has higher clearances underneath.
 - Steve explained that having just one set of support columns in Waterfront Park required a thicker bridge deck which reduced vertical clearances over the park. Having two sets of columns means the deck can be slimmer and increase clearance. He said that the project team could work on providing some direct image comparisons of the two variations.
- Gabe asked when the CTF could see cost comparisons of the cable stayed option versus the tied arch.
 - Steve said type selection will continue after the cost analysis is complete. This cost information will be ready by late summer or fall.

WORKPLAN UPDATE

Heather reviewed the updates to the project schedule and workplan. The cost analysis will add about nine months to the schedule. The Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) will be pushed out about six months, to be completed in mid-2022. She also noted that the start of construction is expected to move out about a year to mid-2025.

NEXT STEPS

Heather shared the upcoming meetings and next steps with the group. The next CTF meeting will be this fall where the group will review the cost analysis findings, the cost cap decision, and aim for concurrence on the updated recommended Preferred Alternative. She noted that the cost analysis may influence which options move into bridge type selection. She also shared the updated schedule for



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working group meetings through summer and fall. CTF members continue to be invited to join whichever working group meetings they are interested in.

- Bill asked if the Biden infrastructure plan could help fund the project.
 - Mike said it was possible and that the project team was actively exploring federal funding opportunities.
 - Bill noted the importance of not missing the federal funding window.
 - Mike and Heather agreed and assured him that the team was tracking federal funds.
- Art asked about the value of making the new bridge streetcar ready.
 - Mike and Steve said that making the bridge deck thick enough to support a future streetcar requires an investment of several million dollars.
 - Art commented that streetcar may not be the best option for providing the ‘last mile’ connections for many people and wondered why it is such a key part of the project.
 - Steve answered that a future streetcar is part of the City’s 30-year Master Plan. The County and project team do not have the authority to discard it.

Mike shared that a delay to the project schedule may seem like a bad thing, but it actually allows the project more time to secure adequate funding to ensure that the project does get built.

ADJOURN

Allison thanked everyone for their time and adjourned the meeting.

ACTION ITEMS

- Action 1: Project team to provide renderings comparing the previous iteration of the westside girder to the updated version.