



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

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September 13, 2021

Community Task Force (CTF) Meeting #26

Meeting Information

Project: Earthquake Ready Burnside Bridge

Subject: CTF, Meeting #26

Date: Monday, September 13, 2021

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

Location: WebEx Video Conference Call and Livestream

Attendees:

CTF Members:

Art Graves, MultCo Bike and Pedestrian Citizen Advisory Committee
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
Marie Dodds, AAA of Oregon
Neil Jensen, Gresham Area Chamber of Commerce
Paul Leitman, Oregon Walks
Peter Finley Fry, Central Eastside Industrial District
Sharon Wood Wortman, Community Member
Stella Funk Butler, Coalition of Gresham Neighborhood Associations
Susan Lindsay, Buckman Community Association
Tesia Eisenberg, Mercy Corps

Project Team Members:

Megan Neill, Multnomah County
Mike Pullen, Multnomah County
Steve Drahota, HDR
Liz Stoppelmann, HDR
Brianna Dunn, HDR
Cassie Davis, CDavis Consulting
Allison Brown, JLA
Sarah Omlor, EnviroIssues
Patrick Sweeney, PBOT

Apologies: Amy Rathfelder, William “Bill” Burgel, Dennis Corwin



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Summary Notes

This online virtual meeting was held over WebEx and livestreamed to the public via Vbrick. Two 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.

PUBLIC COMMENT

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

PROJECT UPDATE

Funding Status

Mike Pullen, Multnomah County, gave an update on the funding status after the project's recent pivot to focus on cost saving measures and securing funding. He reminded the CTF that cost estimates for the old Preferred Alternative exceeded \$800 million. The County currently has access to \$300 million from the Vehicle Registration Fee and the project team is looking at ways to bring down the project cost and identify possible funding opportunities to fill in that gap. Mike mentioned that there is a possibility of another Metro transportation bond coming to voters, likely in 2024. He noted that the State of Oregon has been focused on wildfires and COVID-19 response and hasn't allocated much funding to transportation this year, but that may change in the coming years.

Possible Funding Opportunities:

- Federal Transportation & Infrastructure Package
- Federal RAISE Grant
- Potential Future Regional Transportation Bond Measure
- Multnomah County Vehicle Registration Fee (secured)

Workplan

Mike updated the CTF on the project timeline including the status of the Environmental Review and when the CTF would be making a recommendation on cost-saving measures and bridge type for the movable span. The project team would be presenting their findings on the various cost-saving measures and bridge type options for the west and movable spans over the course of three meetings. The plan is for the CTF to make their recommendations at the October 25th meeting. After the CTF's



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recommendation, there will be a public outreach period to share the cost measures and movable span recommendation with the community. In January, the team will present what was heard from the public back to the CTF where the group will have the chance to confirm their recommendation.

The Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statement (SDEIS) will be published in February/March 2022 followed by a formal comment period that spring. In the summer of 2022, the CTF will reconvene once more before the project moves into the Design Phase. Current members will have the chance to reapply for the CTF for the Design Phase, and others will have the chance to exit if they can't make the additional 2.5-year commitment. This process usually leads to some turnover and gives the chance to integrate some new members.

Working Groups

Mike reviewed the upcoming working group meetings scheduled for this fall and reminded the group they are always invited to attend.

- Urban Design & Aesthetics Sept 2021
- Multi-Modal Sept 2021
- Constructability Oct 2021
- Bridge & Seismic Fall 2021
- Historic / Cultural Consulting Parties Fall 2021
- Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Winter 2021
- Natural Resources Winter 2022

Allison paused to ask for questions.

- Neil Jensen, Gresham Area Chamber of Commerce, asked if the bridge type had to be decided before the construction contractor was selected.
 - Mike answered that the team, with the CTF's recommendation, would likely have the west and movable span types selected ahead of time, but would wait for the contractor's input before deciding on the east span type.

COST SAVING MEASURES

Mike reviewed the project's guiding values as they have considered cost saving measures:

- Moving forward with recommended Long Span Replacement Alternative
- Ensure the Purpose and Need is met
 - Seismic resiliency
 - Emergency response and regional recovery
 - Long term transportation needs
- Maintain County's equity lens

Mike reminded the committee that these cost saving measures will **not** be pursued:





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- 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

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, but the analysis will be complete in October for the CTF to make a recommendation.

Skatepark

The first cost-saving measure is to relocate the eastside approach columns further east to be closer to the Skatepark. This would reduce the cost of groundwork in the geotechnical hazard zone. This option only applies to a tied arch bridge type, not the cable stayed option.

Three options for the placement of the columns were studied. Option 1 would place a row of four columns in the west portion of the Skatepark, making it partially unusable. Option 2 would place a row of two columns in the northwest and southwest corners of the Skatepark with the possibility of shifting one just south of the Skatepark boundary. 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 NE 2nd Ave.

After further study, the project team dismissed options 1 and 2 that would place columns directly in the Skatepark and are continuing to study permutations of option 3, including locating columns on the west side of 2nd Ave. This measure has the potential to save the project \$5-15 million.

- Neil asked if current location of the Skatepark is the ideal location for the columns.
 - Steve said yes, if the Skatepark didn't exist, the columns would be placed in that location to avoid the geotechnical hazard zone.
 - Neil asked if the project team should reassess this since many more people use the bridge than the Skatepark or if the Skatepark could be relocated.
 - Steve explained that the Skatepark is protected as a historic resource. Even though it isn't very old, it is protected for its unique history.
 - Susan Lindsay, Buckman Community Association, asked why the Skatepark seemed to have a greater historic significance than the bridge itself. She wondered why there wasn't a bigger effort to avoid replacing the bridge.



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- Steve reviewed the process of deciding between the four bridge alternatives, including the retrofit option that would have preserved the existing bridge to the extent possible, while bringing it up to the seismic standards needed. In order to make that happen, nearly every part of the bridge would have to be replaced or strengthened which resulted in a higher cost than the replacement options. Constructing a retrofit also had other disadvantages such as greater natural resource impacts, a longer construction schedule, and greater impacts to Waterfront Park. After many CTF discussions, it was decided to replace the bridge because of the prohibitive cost and impacts of the retrofit. Once the Long Span replacement option was chosen as the Preferred Alternative, the NEPA process requires the project to mitigate harm to historic resources, such as the Skatepark, where possible. The cost to save the Skatepark is much lower than the cost to seismically retrofit the existing bridge.
- Mike noted that the project team will document the history of the current bridge. Possibilities include maintaining a website about the history, saving elements of the bridge itself and other creative ideas that have been suggested.
- Steve added that the CTF will help work on this documentation during the Design Phase.
- Jackie Tate, Community Member, asked if there are more cost savings from choosing the tied arch compared to the cable stayed.
 - Steve explained that at this early stage of design, there are many unknowns about the exact way in which the contractor would build each option. Those differences in construction techniques could impact I-5 traffic differently, the amount of temporary work in the river, and even cost. Steve also said that one item the NEPA team is assessing is whether a relocation of the Tied Arch support to the east would provide cost savings. The further east that the tied arch columns are placed, the more savings could be. Even if the columns aren't placed all the way into the Skatepark, there could still be a net savings. More assessment is ongoing and should be concluded before the next CTF meeting.

Streetcar Right of Way

Another cost-saving measure is to reassess the need to acquire a piece of land on the east approach in service of the future streetcar. The bridge itself will be built to be strong enough to accommodate future streetcar tracks and load, per the City's 30-year Master Plan.

An initial assumption was that the project would also acquire a small piece of private property near the Sideyard that would allow the future streetcar to maneuver through the Couch Street "S" curve more easily. This falls outside of the technical requirements of the project and would save about \$5-10 million.

Connections to SKIDMORE MAX STATION and EASTBANK Esplanade



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The County has committed to funding an option to connect the bridge to the Skidmore MAX Station and the Eastbank Esplanade that meets 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 said the cost estimates for the various options are still being analyzed and will be discussed in more detail at one of the October CTF meetings.

Bridge Width

The next cost-saving measure is to reduce the width of the bridge. This option offers the biggest opportunity to reduce cost. The cross section included in the DEIS would have increased the width of the bridge from the current state of 86 feet wide up to about 110 feet over the midspan of the river. The project team is proposing to bring that width down to be closer to the current conditions. To accomplish this, vehicle lanes would be reduced from five to four lanes, and bicycle and pedestrian facilities would be reduced from 20 feet wide in the DEIS cross section, to as narrow as 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 in the DEIS, to 10 or 10.5 feet wide and that extra space could be reallocated to the bike and pedestrian paths. Steve noted that the vehicle lanes would be consistent with City policy on lane widths for this type of roadway facility, generally not to less than the current widths.

There are also several options around how to configure the four traffic lanes (see slide 23 of the presentation).

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

Option 2 has an eastbound focus. It would have one westbound lane and three eastbound lanes. One of the eastbound lanes would be a bus-only lane. 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 lane in-between that would allow for an additional lane of traffic in the appropriate direction during peak hours. One of the dedicated eastbound lanes would be a bus-only lane. Steve said this option would be ideal so long as the engineering issues can be worked out. The biggest challenge is making a reversible lane operationally



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safe so it is clear which way traffic is moving at a particular time without adding permanent barriers that could interfere with emergency vehicles in the event of an earthquake.

Option 4 would have two westbound lanes and two eastbound lanes. Instead of one of the eastbound lanes being a bus-only lane, there would be a queue jump for buses at the traffic light before the bridge on both approaches. This would allow the buses to have priority over vehicle traffic without taking up an entire dedicated lane.

- Art Graves, MultCo Bike and Pedestrian Citizen Advisory Committee, asked what the width of bike and pedestrian lanes are on the Sellwood & Tilikum Bridge.
 - Megan Neill, Multnomah County, said the Sellwood Bridge has 12-foot sidewalks and 5.5-foot bike lanes and Tilikum Crossing has a 14-foot shared bike & pedestrian lane.
 - Art asked how the Tilikum's multiuse lane is divided between bikes and pedestrians.
 - Steve said that a single stripe separates the modes.
- Jackie asked if the lane widths were the same with the reversible lane in slide 22 since it wasn't shown in the picture.
 - Steve said the image doesn't show the reversible lane but the width breakdown will generally be 47 feet total for vehicles and 15.5 feet total for bikes and pedestrians. He noted all the options will be shown later in renderings.
- Susan asked to see where the reversible lane would go.
 - Steve showed the four different lane configuration options and pointed out the reversible lane in option 3. It would be situated in between the dedicated westbound and eastbound lanes.
- Fred Cooper, Laurelhurst Neighborhood Association, asked if the CTF will decide the traffic configuration.
 - Steve said the project team will inform the CTF on all of the options, but in this case, the ultimate decision maker is the City of Portland because they are the Road Authority. The team is actively meeting with the Portland Bureau of Transportation (PBOT) to inform them of all the options. So far, the reversible lane is looking like the best tradeoff. The queue jump may be too expensive.
- Susan asked if the CTF will be able to make a recommendation on the lane.
 - Steve said yes, PBOT and project team would like the CTF to provide a recommendation and input on the decision.
- Peter Finley Fry, Central Eastside Industrial Council, asked about the context for this lane configuration, assuming it will change over the course of the life of the bridge.
 - Steve said this will be the opening configuration for the new bridge and is expected to be in use for the near future. He agreed that the configuration could change over time.
 - Mike also agreed that traffic patterns and the associated lane configurations change over time. He noted that, at one point, the bridge had 6 lanes, 3 lanes in each direction, and that bikes shared a narrow sidewalk with pedestrians. Different modes of transportation increase and decrease in popularity over time.
- Art asked where the potential streetcar lane would be in each of the four lane configurations.

- Steve said the streetcar would be placed in the outside lanes of whichever configuration is chosen. The team is studying ways to strengthen the outside lanes to support the tracks. He noted that the Sellwood Bridge also did this in their construction.
- Neil asked why there isn't a westbound bus-only lane.
 - Steve explained that westbound traffic in the morning is spread out over a few "rush" hours. In the evening, there is a higher volume of travelers going eastbound in a shorter timeframe, causing more traffic and delays. That's why there is a greater benefit for an eastbound bus-only lane.
- Paul Leitman, Oregon Walks, said despite the narrower width from the initial proposed bridge design, he was glad to see a bike lane that is wider than the current bridge. He thanked the project team for their work studying all of the options.
- Neil shared that he thought the cable stayed was the best option right now because it only has one set of columns on the east side and has the best design, in his opinion.
- Tesia Eisenberg, Mercy Corps, said she'd never seen a reversible lane and asked how it would work safely.
 - Steve answered that reversible lanes sometimes involve a physical barrier that slides across the bridge each morning and evening to change the direction of the lane. In the case of the Burnside Bridge though, the speed limit is low enough that it would likely rely on overhead signage and striping.
 - Art, Jackie, and Jane Gordon, University of Oregon, added that reversible lanes are used in Boston, Seattle, and New York.
- Susan expressed concern for traffic backups on the east side when headed westbound. She said since all current funding comes from the VRF, limiting the bridge to only one westbound lane was not very good public policy. She hoped that the reversible lane will be fully explored and was curious to learn more about the queue jump option.
 - Steve said more graphics about the queue jump will be shared soon.

BRIDGE TYPE SELECTION

Steve shared an update on bridge type selection. He explained that there was enough existing data and analysis to make a recommendation on the west approach and the movable span during the Environmental Review Phase, but east approach would likely be decided during Final Design after the construction contractor is selected and can provide more input about both options.

- Susan asked why all of the graphics show a girder on the west approach. She asked if there was no longer an option for a cable stayed or tied arch on the west side.
 - Steve reminded the group about the discussion at the last CTF meeting about the impact of a tall superstructure on the west side and Downtown Historic District. This, along with the cost savings, now point to a girder structure on the west side as the most viable option. Steve said this decision will be talked about in detail at the next meeting.
 - Susan asked if this was a consensus that the CTF came to at the last meeting.

- Steve said there was no official decision by the CTF yet and assured her that more discussion will be had with the CTF and the general public.
- Susan commented that it felt like a decision had been made without taking the group’s opinion into account. She recalled that most of the CTF was in favor of symmetry in the bridge’s design.
 - Jackie agreed. She asked if the girder would still have a thicker deck and more support columns on the west side.
 - Steve explained that this decision will be influenced by the NEPA findings around adverse effects of a superstructure on the historic districts on the west side, as well as the matter of cost. NEPA requires the project to identify mitigation to the adverse effect. He told the group that the girder had been refined to have a higher vertical clearance over Waterfront Park.
 - Jennifer Stein asked if this decision was due to feedback from the permitting organizations.
 - Fred asked if this decision was made at a working group meeting or by the project staff.
 - Steve replied that it was discussed at both levels, but assured the group that more information would be presented at the next meeting.
 - Fred said he remembered this being briefly mentioned at the last meeting but would need to be discussed in detail to ensure the CTF’s process isn’t sidestepped.
 - Susan echoed Fred and asked for more explanation and justification for why the symmetrical options had been taken off the table.
 - Neil thanked Susan for addressing this issue.

Steve and Allison acknowledged the CTF’s request for more information and Steve reassured the group that there would be a chance for more in depth discussion at their next meeting.

Steve shared that a recommendation for the movable span between bascule and lift has not been made yet. The Urban Design and Aesthetics Working Group would be meeting on 9/29 and the 10/11 CTF meeting would include time for the group go through the various tradeoffs of the two options before making a preliminary recommendation for the package of Preferred Alternative refinements on 10/25. The group would be able to confirm their recommendation after the public outreach phase in the fall.

Steve and Allison asked the CTF what additional information they would need in order to feel comfortable making a recommendation on the movable span at the October 25th meeting.

- Neil said it would be helpful to know how the movable span will hold up for the next 50 years – if it would be “future proof.”
- Jane asked to see how high the towers will be and for examples of bridges that have different supports on either side.
- Peter said he was curious to learn about the financial or functional connection with the Rose Quarter project.
- Fred suggested having a deck-level view looking east from the east side of the movable span.



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NEXT STEPS

Steve shared the upcoming meetings and next steps with the group. The next CTF meeting will be October 11th where the group will review the west side approach and movable span in preparation for making a formal recommendation on October 25th. He reviewed the overall project timeline including the public outreach period this fall, the release of the SDEIS and NEPA public comment period in early 2022, and the release of the Final EIS and Record of Decision that will wrap up the environmental review period in mid-2022.

ADJOURN

Allison thanked everyone for their time and adjourned the meeting.

ACTION ITEMS

- Action 1: Project team to confirm the division of bike and pedestrian space on the Tilikum Crossing.
- Action 2: Project team to gather additional visuals to explain the bus queue jump.
- Action 3: Project team to gather visuals of the lift towers and west approach superstructure heights in comparison to the downtown historical districts.
- Action 4: Project team to gather examples of asymmetrical bridges.