



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

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October 25, 2021

# Community Task Force (CTF) Meeting #28

## Meeting Information

**Project:** Earthquake Ready Burnside Bridge

**Subject:** CTF, Meeting #28

**Date:** Monday, October 25, 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  
Marie Dodds, AAA of Oregon  
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  
William "Bill" Burgel, Portland Freight Advisory Committee  
Neil Jensen, Gresham Area Chamber of Commerce

#### Project Team Members:

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



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

BETTER – SAFER – CONNECTED

October 25, 2021

## Summary Notes

This online virtual meeting was held over WebEx and live-streamed to the public via Vbrick. 4 public attendees logged in to view the live stream. 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. Alison summarized two comments that were received:

- John Czarnecki submitted a letter urging the project to reconsider the enhanced seismic retrofit option or a hybrid option of replacing the east and west approaches while saving and retrofitting the bascule span for the purposes of historic preservation and environmental concerns.
- Andrew Holtz submitted a letter advocating for adequate bike and pedestrian space on the bridge for navigation after an earthquake and to fulfill the city's climate goals. Andrew noted that immediately following a major earthquake it is likely that personal vehicles will not be able to cross the bridge because of emergency vehicles and undrivable roads throughout the city. Individuals will likely need to walk or bike to cross the river and as the only crossing available it will be crowded.

Art Graves, Multnomah County Bike and Pedestrian Citizen Advisory Committee, added that his organization had a public comment to share which was submitted to the team and shared with the CTF after the meeting.

### PROJECT UPDATE

#### County Opening Remarks

Jon Henrichsen, Director of Multnomah County's Transportation Division, spoke to the CTF to provide some context on similar capital projects and why the County asked for a cost reduction analysis. Typically, capital projects like this don't have any funding at this stage which means that the Earthquake Ready Burnside Bridge project is ahead of schedule since it already has \$300 million earmarked from the vehicle registration fee (VRF). He shared that the recent Sellwood Bridge Replacement Project didn't have any funding at this stage of the project. He also said that it is also typical to not have a detailed cost estimate at this stage.





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

BETTER – SAFER – CONNECTED

October 25, 2021

Jon said what is *not* normal about the project is the COVID-19 pandemic. Due to the pandemic, interruptions to supply chains and labor have sharply increased construction costs for all projects. This is one reason for the County's cost reduction analysis for this project. If construction costs restabilize in the future, the County may not need to be so conservative with the project, but it's unknown if that will happen at this point.

He closed by saying that if this project isn't designed and built now, it is unlikely to get off the ground again in the future because of the political will and investments it took to get this far. He also noted that it could be too late because an earthquake could happen at any time. He acknowledged that some people feel there is no point in building a narrower bridge, but he argued that any river crossing will be better than nothing at all after a major earthquake.

Allison paused to ask for questions:

- Tesia Eisenberg, Mercy Corps, and Fred Cooper, Laurelhurst Neighborhood Association, thanked Jon for the overview.
- Susan Lindsay, Buckman Community Association, was surprised to hear Jon's comment about prices possibly never coming down.
  - Steve Drahota, HDR, added that a similar construction cost spike happened a few years ago. Since prices were so high, agencies decided to spread out projects over time which caused demand to decrease, ultimately helping to produce a drop in costs. He noted that a third-party economist will be brought on in the next phase of the project to help with this forecasting.

### Status Update: Preliminary Cost Estimate

Steve gave a project cost update in response to CTF questions at the last meeting. He compared the 2020 DEIS cost estimate with the project's new cost estimate. Since the 2020 DEIS cost estimate of **\$800 - \$965 million**, multiple factors have changed: most notably, COVID impacts to workforce and material availability as well as competing mega-projects are driving up costs. This is a driving factor for why the new cost estimate, even with the cost-saving measures, came in at **\$825 - \$915 million**. This estimate assumes a conservative economic forecast that *does not return to pre-COVID levels*. Prices have also been adjusted to reflect inflation due to the project's 1-year delay of the construction start date. The team also contacted contractors directly for more accurate price quotes for this estimate.

Steve noted that this price range is the project's best estimate at this time, but will likely fluctuate over time because of the current volatility of construction prices. He reassured the group that these market conditions are affecting jurisdictions across the country and not just this project. He added that ODOT recently sent an unprecedented memo alerting project teams that their bids are expected to be 10% – 15% higher because of increases in the prices of steel, concrete, and other commodities of 150% – 200%.

The project's next steps to further refine the cost estimate will be:





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BETTER – SAFER – CONNECTED

October 25, 2021

- Updating bridge designs to incorporate additional geotechnical analysis
- Performing a Cost Risk Analysis in early 2022
- Consulting with a third-party economist to refine future market conditions and escalation assessments

More information about design impacts on cost along with insight from the contractor on the East approach span will be available in early 2023.

### Workplan

Steve reviewed the project timeline including the status of the Environmental Review and the project's decision process. CTF members will be asked if they recommend the package of refinements to the Preferred Alternative at this meeting. After the CTF's recommendation, there will be a public outreach period to share the cost-saving 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 or revise their recommendation. After that, the Policy Group will consider the recommendation for approval. It will then go to the Board of County Commissioners and City Council before being adopted into the Metro Regional Transportation Plan. Update in 2023.

### REFINEMENTS TO THE PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE

Steve reviewed the Preferred Alternative refinements, their cost savings and explained which refinements were up to the CTF to recommend and which decisions would be made by the County, the City, or would be deferred until final design.



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BETTER – SAFER – CONNECTED

October 25, 2021

Revised Preferred Alternative Refinements	Why?	CTF Recommendation on 10/25
<b>1. Bridge width:</b> Reduced by approx. 26 feet	• Cost savings	✓
<b>2. Vehicle Lanes:</b> Reduced from 5 to 4 vehicular lanes	• Cost savings	✓
Lane Configurations: 4 Options under consideration	• Minimize traffic impact	City decision
<b>3. Bike / Ped Space:</b> Reduced from 20' to 14' – 17'	• Cost savings	✓
<b>4. West Approach bridge type:</b> Reduced to only Girder type	• Regulatory permitting • Cost savings	✓
<b>5. Movable span bridge type:</b> Select either Lift or Bascule type	• Regulatory permitting • Community preference • Cost savings	✓
<b>6. East Span Bridge Type:</b> Dismiss Truss (Tied Arch and Cable Stayed types advanced to Design Phase)	• Community preference	Final Design
Eastside column location for Tied Arch: Advancing option west of NE 2 <sup>nd</sup> Avenue	• Regulatory permitting • Cost savings	County decision
ADA Connections to Bridge: Advance stairs and elevators	• Cost savings	County decision

- Jane Gordon, University of Oregon, shared that with all the information presented so far, it felt like the CTF had no other option but to vote for the refinements package or else the project can't happen.
  - Susan said she felt that the project would continue if they voted against the package, but there would be some hurdles in addressing their concerns. She felt it could be an opportunity for the CTF to make their objections clear.
  - Alison asked Jane if she could explain her feelings further.
  - Jane said it was clear that the project costs have to come down but wondered if there were alternatives beyond the current set of refinements that hadn't been considered. She felt that the CTF was being shoehorned into these saving cost-saving measures.
  - Mike Pullen, Multnomah County, said that Susan's statement was an honest assessment. If the CTF doesn't support the refinements package the project would go forward with presenting the refinements to the public. The CTF could then hear the public's opinion and either confirm their recommendation against the refinements package or amend it to support the package. Mike said the CTF could also recommend the package with additional stipulations at tonight's meeting.



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

BETTER – SAFER – CONNECTED

October 25, 2021

- Neil Jensen, Gresham Area Chamber of Commerce, shared that he has worked with economists in the past and understands their future market conditions studies are only predictions. He felt that the project should be considered a necessity rather than something to build if there's funding.
  - Mike noted that it is not guaranteed that the project will be fully funded because funding is reliant on legislative support. He added that community support for the project is helpful in securing funding.
  - Neil asked how we tell if the community is on board.
  - Mike said the CTF is a part of the community, so this group's opinion is a part of the story. The project also has data from past online open houses which showed that about 89% of respondents agreed with the Preferred Alternative. Politicians consider that support when deciding where to allot federal funds.
- Peter Finley Fry, Central Eastside Industrial Council, shared concern for decisions being taken outside of the public and the CTF, such as for the ADA connections to Waterfront Park and the Eastbank Esplanade. He noted that Governor Brown has stated that the Rose Quarter Project is a priority for the state, which impacts this project because it could take precedence for federal funding. He shared support for the wider bridge and suggested that the team further study the possibility of a flat bridge deck on the east side with no superstructure. Peter also shared that the Central Eastside Industrial District will be submitting its opinion on the bridge type.
- Gabe Rahe, Burnside Skatepark, asked if the cost-saving measures are shown in today's numbers or account for future inflation.
  - Steve said the COVID price spike is reflected in the cost estimate numbers presented today and the escalation for future years includes inflation.
- Ed Wortman, Community Member, agreed with other members' concerns about the bridge width. He felt that the bridge will have enormous demand if it's the only bridge available after an earthquake. He believed the bridge width is a different issue than the rest of the refinements because it will affect future demand. He recommended that the project show traffic model data when they go to the public because, although the project team seems confident that the decreased width will be adequate, the CTF and the public aren't familiar with expected future conditions. He said it is hard to make tonight's recommendation without that data.
  - Steve said they didn't initially show that data because it's very detailed, but he will share more tonight. He said that based on Metro's traffic model, used for planning all future projects in our region, traffic patterns in 20-25 years are predicted to be the same as today because of increased bus ridership, increased dependencies on bicycling and pedestrian use, and higher parking costs will offset population growth. The reversible lane option seems to work well in the models so far for the peak travel times. He noted that the team can send the final traffic model results to the CTF once the SDEIS is published.
  - Ed said he was glad that the project has this data and has studied it closely.
  - Patrick Sweeney, PBOT, added that while the City remains open to a 4-lane option, they have requested that a 5-lane option remain on the table, recognizing that it is

dependent upon additional funding being identified. Of the 4-lane options, Option 3 (reversible) appears to be the best, although several issues remain unresolved, most notably making sure that the operations and functionality of how to use the reversible lane is clear to users.

## **CTF DISCUSSION**

Allison paused for CTF discussion before the vote:

- Jane asked if the CTF would be asked to vote on each option separately. She also noted that Patrick’s statement about PBOT wanting a 5-lane bridge was very important information.
  - Steve said the team was hoping for a single vote on the cost-saving measures as a package and not a line-item vote on each measure, although providing input on each was welcomed by the Project team. By proposing these measures as a group of options, the project has the best chance of getting built.
  - Jane noted she was worried that the whole package will get fewer supporting votes.
  - Mike said if the group wanted to vote on each item, that can be done.
- Susan shared her preference for voting on each item, and her eagerness to start voting.
- Peter asked about the possibility of going back to a 5-lane width if the funding was received.
  - Mike and Jeff Heilman, Parametrix, explained that, from a NEPA perspective, if more funding was secured, a 5-lane bridge was still possible because it was already studied in the DEIS.
  - Peter asked to clarify if a future 5-lane bridge would need to conform to the width in the DEIS.
  - Jeff confirmed and noted that the County couldn’t build a bridge wider than what was previously studied unless they could prove that there would be no additional impacts.
- Bill Burgel, Portland Freight Advisory Committee, asked if more vehicle space is needed in the future with the narrower option if space could be taken from the bike and pedestrian facilities. He noted if a car lane can be taken away, then so can a bike lane.
- Fred shared support for voting on each item individually so specific concerns could be expressed.
  - Allison asked what other CTF members thought.
  - Tesia said she didn’t mind voting on the package overall but would still like to state her opinion on each item individually.
  - Stella Funk Butler, Coalition of Gresham Neighborhood Associations, and Howie Bierbaum, Portland Saturday Market, preferred voting on individual items.
  - Jackie Tate, Community Member, is fine with voting as a package but would share specific input on each item.
  - Gabe said he was fine with either way.
  - Jane said as long as participants’ comments are captured, it shouldn’t matter which way they voted.

- Art noted that in a previous meeting, it was shared that the ADA connection is the County's decision. He asked if this was removed from the project to remove cost.
  - Steve said stairs and elevators on both sides of the river are included in the current estimates.
  - Art asked if they are being funded by PBOT or the County.
  - Patrick said they are built into the project costs being funded by the County.
- Jackie asked if the stairs and elevators would be similar to the Hawthorne Bridge facilities.
  - Mike said there is no elevator on the Hawthorne bridge.
  - Jackie clarified that she mixed up the bathroom under the stairs with an elevator. She asked if any bridges in Portland have an elevator.
  - Paul answered that the Gibbs Street Pedestrian Bridge and the bridges that cross the railroad tracks south of the Central Eastside have elevators.
  - Jennifer Stein, Central City Concern, added there is also an elevator at the pedestrian bridge over the train tracks in Old Town, south of Broadway.
  - Jackie and Howie felt that elevators are a safety concern and a maintenance issue.
  - Jackie shared that she was recently in Seattle where there was an elevator down to a transit station that had an attendant in it for safety and to make sure it remained accessible.
- Art asked if the CTF is voting for a version of the ADA connections in the package.
  - Steve said the stairs and elevator connections do have a cost savings, but the CTF is specifically not being asked to vote on this issue at this time.
  - Mike added that the team has been reaching out to ADA advocates separately for input. At this time, the County is including the stairs and elevator option in the SDEIS because it is the least cost option but remain open to other options if funding becomes available. A final decision won't be made until the final design phase.

Allison asked if there were other concerns the group wanted to discuss.

- Peter noted that he would be abstaining from the vote until his organization can weigh in.
  - Amy Rathfelder, Portland Business Alliance, said she would be abstaining until her organization weighs in too.
- Bill asked if the seismic retrofit is still an option, in reference to the public comment received. He asked if a narrower bridge, similar to the current width, changed the feasibility of the retrofit.
  - Mike said that the Long Span Replacement was the Preferred Alternative recommended by the CTF and supported by the public and the Policy Group. The project is sticking with this bridge option because it's the best cost and seismic resilient option.
  - Steve added that there is no new information about the retrofit. When it was studied, the project team studied hybrid versions that would replace only portions of the bridge, as suggested in the public comment. However, preserving any part of the original structure would need significant retrofits which would change the look of the bridge



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BETTER – SAFER – CONNECTED

October 25, 2021

significantly. Concrete would need to be coated around the bridge making it bulkier and the piers and moveable span would need to be entirely replaced.

- Jackie asked if the new bridge is going to be narrower than the current bridge.
  - Steve said it would be slightly narrower at the midspan by about 2-4 feet.

### CTF PRELIMINARY RECOMMENDATION

Allison gave a review on the voting process for the CTF. Members would vote on the measures as a single package. She asked that they give a thumbs up, down, or to the side meaning they support, oppose, or can accept the measure, respectively. She also urged everyone to provide comments for the record if they have any reservations about the measure.

**The CTF recommendations on whether to move the package of 3 refinements to the Preferred Alternative forward for community review and input were as follows:**



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

BETTER – SAFER – CONNECTED

October 25, 2021

CTF Member	Recommendation: Advance the package of 3 Preferred Alternative refinements for community review and input			Reasoning, if provided
	Support	Accept	Oppose	
Bill		X		No comments.
Amy				Abstained to wait for their organization’s decision process.
Art				Abstained to wait for their organization’s decision process.
Dennis			X	Concerned with the bridge width. Felt that it’s shortsighted to build a bridge with less capacity.
Fred	X			Felt that the need to keep moving forward with an earthquake-ready bridge is the first priority. Felt that the historic preservation argument for buildings attached to the bridge is irrelevant because those buildings won’t survive an earthquake. Prefers the girder for preserving viewpoints and prefers the stairs & elevator ADA connections because ramps aren’t aesthetically pleasing.
Gabe	X			Concerned with the bridge width. Felt that it’s shortsighted to build a bridge with less capacity.
Howie		X		Concerned with the bridge width. Felt that it’s shortsighted to build a bridge with less capacity.
Jackie	X			Noted that the bridge will be about the same overall width as the current bridge, just smaller than what was initially studied in the DEIS. Agreed that 5 lanes would be better but can live with 4 lanes.
Jane		X		Supported the westside girder and bascule moveable span but concerned with the bridge width. Felt that it’s shortsighted to build a bridge with less capacity. Jane also responded to Fred’s comment saying the White Stag building is mostly retrofitted and will hopefully not be turned to rubble in an earthquake.



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

BETTER – SAFER – CONNECTED

October 25, 2021

Jennifer		X		Supported the westside girder and bascule moveable span but concerned with the bridge width. Felt that it's shortsighted to build a bridge with less capacity. As a representative for vulnerable populations, supported more ADA options than just stairs and elevator. Believes everyone should have the same access points.
Neil				[Not present]
Paul	X			Believed that the width is adequate because there are many other bridges that vehicles can use before the earthquake. After an earthquake, even if the Burnside is the only bridge left, it is unlikely that personal vehicles will be crossing for a while. As long as there is space for emergency vehicles, the bridge will be extremely useful.
Peter				Abstained to wait for their organization's decision process.
Sharon	X			Supported the package with the hope that the County would find the funding to build a 5-lane bridge.
Ed	X			Felt comfortable to advance the narrower width bridge to the public.
Susan		X		Wanted to support the package as seismic resiliency is the first priority but concerned that the public won't be supportive of the width. Concerned that the reversible lane is too complicated to be realistic. In support of additional ADA connections. As someone with accessibility needs, she wouldn't feel safe using an elevator.
Tesia	X			Prefers a 5-lane bridge, however, the first priority is seismic resiliency and doesn't want to delay that decision.
Stella		X		Supported the westside girder and bascule moveable span but concerned with the bridge width. Felt that it's shortsighted to build a bridge with less capacity.



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

BETTER – SAFER – CONNECTED

October 25, 2021

Marie		X		<b>[Voted prior to meeting]</b> Supported the westside girder and bascule moveable span but concerned with the bridge width. Felt that it's shortsighted to build a bridge with less capacity.
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In summary, CTF members recommended that the package of three Preferred Alternative refinements advance for community review and input, with 7 members supporting, 7 members accepting and 1 member opposing. The project team will follow up with CTF members representing organizations to share their vote once their organization reviews.

Allison noted that this recommendation had the most hesitation of any CTF recommendation so far due to the reduced width of the bridge. There was unanimous support for the westside girder and bascule moveable span.

Allison gave the CTF a chance to make official comments on any of the Preferred Alternative refinements that weren't voted on:

- Howie asked if the elevator on the west side is contingent on the Skidmore MAX stop remaining, or if the elevator be built regardless to connect people to SW 1<sup>st</sup> Ave.
  - Mike said yes, the elevator is contingent on the MAX stop being there because its primary purpose is getting people to the stop. He also reminded everyone of the possible bus stop relocation on the west approach of the bridge. The project has confirmed that the project will include sidewalk improvements to make it easier to get from the bridge to Waterfront Park and SW 1<sup>st</sup> Ave regardless of the possible changes to the bus stop and MAX station.
- Fred shared concern for congestion problems with a 4-lane configuration. He recognized that this is ultimately a City decision but strongly urged for general street network enhancements on the east side of the bridge if the 4 lane configuration is built.
- Fred apologized for his comment about historical buildings being turned to rubble, including the University of Oregon building with the Portland Oregon sign. He said he's aware it has a seismic retrofit and asked if it is designed to survive a Cascadia subduction earthquake.
  - Jane said she was not offended and that she was unsure about the specific level of retrofitting, but she was assured that the location of the building and the retrofit make it likely to survive.
- Susan noted that she and Peter both share concerns for the east side bridge type.
- Tesia echoed others' comments about the ADA connections needing to be inclusive and safe for people of all abilities.
- Art asked why the ADA connections weren't in the CTF's purview. He pointed out that these connections are more than just an ADA issue because they also serve as connections to nearby neighborhoods which shouldn't be an afterthought. [The CTF will have a chance to weigh in on



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BETTER – SAFER – CONNECTED

October 25, 2021

the type of connections and their design during the Final Design phase when these decisions are made.]

- - Jane agreed with Art's point.
- Jane shared that she works in Old Town and knows that in the event of an earthquake she could be separated from her home and family on the east side. She urged the CTF to remember that this bridge is a serious issue and not just about aesthetics. She said if the perfect bridge isn't possible, the next best option should move forward. Another seismically resilient crossing could be built in the future that prioritized size and design.

### NEXT STEPS

Mike thanked the CTF for their recommendation and comments. He said the next step was to give the public a chance to weigh in. He reviewed the timeline for public outreach, the decision process, and environmental review:

- November/December 2021 - Share recommendations with the public and seek feedback
- January 2022 CTF Meeting – Share community feedback and confirm recommendation
- January 2022 PG Meeting – Seek Policy Group's approval and adoption by the Board of County Commissioners [now scheduled for March]
- March/April 2022 – Publication of SDEIS and start of the public comment period
- Summer 2022 CTF Meeting – Review SDEIS feedback and conclude CTF's work
- September 2022 – Publication of the Final EIS

### ADJOURN

Allison thanked everyone for their time and adjourned the meeting.

### ACTION ITEMS

- Action 1: Project team will send the final traffic model numbers to the CTF once the SDEIS is published.
- Action 2: Project team will follow up with Amy, Art and Peter on their organization's recommendation



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BETTER – SAFER – CONNECTED

October 25, 2021

**PUBLIC COMMENTS RECEIVED**

\*to be included in the Final PDF