



EARLY STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEW FINDINGS REPORT

Project:	Earthquake Ready Burnside Bridge
Date:	May 5, 2017
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OVERVIEW

Obtaining public, stakeholder and partnering agency input into Earthquake Ready Burnside Bridge is a key value held by the Board of County Commissioners and important to project outcomes. Outreach efforts for the Earthquake Ready Burnside Bridge project were kicked off with initial stakeholder interviews held between December 6, 2016, and January 12, 2017. The project team interviewed 14 project stakeholders who were long-term partners and representatives from key stakeholder community groups, which included community organizations, businesses and Multnomah County Departments.

The purpose of the interviews was threefold: first, to introduce the feasibility study to a core stakeholder group; second, to gather interviewees’ initial reactions to project messaging and provide feedback on the most effective ways to keep stakeholders engaged and informed throughout the project; and third, to identify early project issues and opportunities.

For the Earthquake Ready Burnside Bridge Project to be successful, community interests and viewpoints must be considered when identifying and evaluating alternative lifeline crossings. These initial stakeholder contacts were the project’s first outreach activity, initiating the ongoing process of listening to the community and incorporating their perspectives into the feasibility study.

This interview report summarizes the feedback received in the early stakeholder interviews. Overall, interviewees expressed widespread interest in the project's intent. There was general agreement on, but varying reasons for, the need for an improved Burnside Bridge. Most interviewees also shared an interest in learning more about the Burnside lifeline corridor and exploring options for a more earthquake-resilient Willamette River crossing.

Feedback received from the interviews will be considered in shaping public involvement activities and during the alternatives screening and evaluation process.

INTERVIEW PARTICIPANTS

Participants in the early stakeholder interviews represent a cross-section of the varied interests surrounding this effort. Community organizations interviewed represent the following constituencies: road and river users, local businesses, social services, emergency responders and coordinating Multnomah County departments.

Community Organizations and Businesses*

- AAA (American Automobile Association)
- AMR (American Medical Response)
- The Street Trust (formerly Bicycle Transportation Alliance)
- Central City Concern
- Central Eastside Industrial Council
- JOIN
- Louis Dreyfus Company
- Old Town/Chinatown Community Association
- OTA (Oregon Trucking Association)

Multnomah County Departments

- Multnomah County Bicycle and Pedestrian Citizen Advisory Committee
- Multnomah County Health Department
- Multnomah County Office of Diversity and Equity
- Multnomah County Office of Emergency Management
- Multnomah County Office of Sustainability

* *The project team invited OPAL, Office of Neighborhood Involvement and Saturday Market to participate. Due to a variety of reasons, these organizations were unable to partake in the initial round of interviews but will be engaged in future efforts.*

KEY FINDINGS

Key Messages

Interviewees were asked to listen to the initial project key messages and then provide feedback on what stood out most. The feedback received emphasized several key items:

- The idea that Portland's downtown bridges are old and need upgrading is a central information point, and interviewees tended to agree this is an important message to deliver. In addition, interviewees shared the key messages should explain why the Burnside Bridge is the priority downtown bridge for upgrading, and concepts of safety and lifeline are important themes to convey.
- Several stakeholders stated the initial key messages placed too much emphasis on the potential earthquake disaster and were too fear-based. There was conflicting feedback about the effectiveness of disaster-focused messaging – some felt this is an effective way to gain interest, while others believe scare tactics are overused or a ruse to get funding.
- Some stakeholders mentioned the messaging shouldn't promise this project can ensure a bridge will be standing in the event of an earthquake. Project messaging shouldn't overpromise what the bridge or this project can deliver.

- Project messaging should use understandable language. There was mixed feedback regarding whether “lifeline” or “earthquake-readiness” is well understood.

Actions Taken to Date: The project team used this feedback to rework and finalize the project key messages.

Study Name, Graphic and Tagline

Interviewees reviewed the draft project graphic, name and tagline. The following is a summary of the feedback received:

- Stakeholders did not have strong reactions to the project name. Comments indicated that the name emphasized earthquake more than the possibility of a new bridge; the word readiness overpromises what the bridge may be capable of during and after an earthquake event; and, finally, the project name could change after the feasibility study is completed.
- There were mixed responses to the project graphic. The version of the graphic reviewed by stakeholders included a seismograph line in a box. While some liked that the graphic represented earthquake risk, others felt it was scary, dysfunctional and confusing. Some remarked the graphic looked like an envelope or the seismograph line looked like an EKG reading. Others suggested the graphic should include bridge elements, illustrate the lifeline connection and/or represent the concept of strength.
- Overall, stakeholders liked the presented project colors.
- Stakeholders shared a few comments regarding the draft project tagline, including: how the word “better” implies an opportunity for vast improvements on a new or rehabilitated bridge, and the word “connected” is subjective, as the public will unlikely be able to use the bridge right away.

Actions Taken to Date: The project graphic has been updated to reflect the feedback. It now emphasizes the bridge and its connection over the river. The project name has been updated to “Earthquake Ready Burnside Bridge,” and the project tagline will remain the same, since the project team does not believe there is a conflict between the tagline’s perceived meaning and the project’s possibilities.

Project Opportunities

Interviewees provided several opportunities to consider with the feasibility study and in later project stages. The following is a summary of the feedback received:

- **Bridge alternatives should allow for multi-modal solutions.** There were several comments about the need to include bike, pedestrian and transit improvements when considering alternatives.
- **Coordinate with stakeholders and agencies that rely on or share responsibilities to maintain the lifeline corridor.** Interviewees suggested coordinating with first responders and emergency managers and encouraged engaging stakeholders and agency partners that share responsibilities for the overall Burnside corridor (from Washington County to City of Gresham), especially jurisdictions.
- **Maximize the impact of the investment** by incorporating opportunities like job training, local purchasing and a bridge design that creates a new community space. Another suggestion was to involve organizations who have preparation plans for a post-earthquake scenario, like cargo bikers and social service agencies. Coordination

and event partnering with earthquake-planning organizations and efforts could be mutually beneficial for both the organization and project.

- **Educate the public** about important topics, such as transportation funding, regional planning, emergency preparedness and the Burnside lifeline corridor.
- **Consider funding sources early on.** One interviewee suggested the project consider whether public/private partnerships could help fund the project. It was also suggested that the project tie into existing plans, like the [Regional Transportation Plan](#) and [Green Loop](#).

Actions Taken to Date: Membership of project stakeholder committees includes stakeholders and agencies that rely on or share responsibilities to maintain the lifeline corridor. In addition, project materials and website are being developed to provide educational information about concepts, such as the Burnside lifeline corridor.

Project Questions and Issues

Interviewees posed several important questions and issues for the project. The following points summarize the principal points raised:

- Most interviewees asked about project funding. Many asked how much a bridge replacement or rehabilitation will cost and where project funding will come from. Questions about funding also included why this project should be prioritized over other important spending priorities, such as affordable housing. One interviewee brought up it will be confusing to the public that money is being spent on maintenance now if the bridge will eventually be replaced or rehabilitated.
- Many asked why Burnside Bridge is a priority over other bridges.
- Many wondered about the impacts of construction to the surrounding communities, bridge users and natural environment.
- Questions were raised about who the bridge serves today and whether new features or infrastructure can be included in a new bridge to make it more inclusive and safe with improved bike and pedestrian features.
- Some questioned whether an old bridge, like Burnside Bridge, could be successfully rehabilitated to survive a large earthquake.
- Concerns were raised about site conditions surrounding the bridge following a major earthquake. These included concerns about liquefaction zones on each side of the bridge, potential debris from collapsed unreinforced masonry buildings in Old Town and glass buildings on the east end of the bridge. Others worried the other portions of the Burnside lifeline corridor may be unusable if additional preparation and coordination is not completed. Some asked what the plan will be to control bridge access after an earthquake.
- There is skepticism that a new Burnside Bridge is needed at a high cost and that earthquake preparedness is a ruse to scare up funding to repair the bridge.
- Some were disturbed that Portland is vulnerable now, given it will be years before we have an earthquake-resilient crossing in place. They wondered why this is only being starting now, what happens if there is an earthquake before the bridge is ready, and what will be done to prepare in the meantime.
- Some asked about how community members will be able to participate in the study.

Actions Taken to Date: Project materials and frequently asked questions (FAQs) respond directly to some of the questions and issues brought up. The project team has also committed to

be proactive in listening and responding to stakeholder issues and questions throughout all project phases.

Communications and Outreach

Interview participants were asked to weigh in on the best ways to keep constituents and the larger community informed of and engaged in project activities.

Interviewee responses were mixed regarding how best to communicate to constituents and the larger community. Preferred outreach methods include project emails, an up-to-date website and social media, as well as committee meeting presentations and briefings. Advertising on buses and billboards was also suggested.

Interviewees were asked whether the project website should provide information about both the Burnside Bridge Maintenance Project and Earthquake Ready Burnside Bridge. Most said the two projects should be included on a single website page but with clear separation to avoid confusion. A suggestion was made to tie the two projects together by connecting the short-term project (maintenance) with the long-term project (resiliency).

Other website suggestions included offering opportunities for stakeholders to provide input directly on the site and to make it an interactive experience. Others suggested the website share information about personal and community preparedness. Finally, it was suggested the website include videos that tell the project story.

Actions Taken to Date: The Burnside Stakeholder Engagement Plan included the suggested outreach ideas. A website plan has been developed, following the advice to post the Maintenance and Earthquake Ready Projects on the same page and tell the story of how today's maintenance is part of the larger plan to have a reliable Burnside Bridge in place until an upgraded river crossing is ready.

Additional Stakeholders to Involve

Interview participants were asked who else should be involved in the study. The following summarizes additional stakeholders by categories. A detailed list of recommended contacts is included in Appendix C and includes the following.

- Potential Stakeholder Representative Group members
- State and local agency contacts
- Social justice groups (including OPAL, Verde, Union Gospel Mission, Street Roots)
- Transportation groups (including Oregon and SW Washington Families for Safe Streets, Oregon Walks, Better Block PDX)
- Labor leaders (including Metro Alliance for Workforce Equity)
- Hospitals
- Schools (including K-12 and higher education)

Actions Taken to Date: Stakeholder Representative Group membership deliberations considered interviewee suggestions to maximize broad community representation. Other suggested stakeholders will be invited to participate in project outreach efforts, such as project briefings, surveys and open house events.