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Multnomah County Kicks Off Design Phase for Burnside Bridge

The [Earthquake Ready Burnside Bridge Project](#) is now in the Design Phase. In this phase the project team will start to evaluate bridge form, architectural and aesthetic features, mechanical and structural engineering, constructability as well as cost and long-term maintenance needs. The project team will work closely with engineers, architects, contractors, agencies, regulatory bodies and the community during this phase. After final design plans are complete, the project can move into construction.

In late 2023, through a competitive selection process, the County hired design firm, [HDR](#), and bridge architect subcontractor, [BEAM](#), to lead the engineering and architectural process. The County also selected [Burnside Bridge Partners](#) as its construction contractor. Burnside Bridge Partners is a joint venture between three notable transportation and bridge construction firms. This includes [Stacy and Witbeck](#), the employee-owned firm that built Portland's streetcar system and multiple light rail lines, [Traylor Bros](#), which has constructed more than 135 major bridges and [American Bridge](#), which fabricated the original Burnside Bridge and built the Astoria Bridge over the Columbia River in its more than 120-year history. Burnside Bridge Partners brings extensive experience with collaborative project delivery, construction of technically challenging and signature bridges and has demonstrated a dedication to diversity and equity in both subcontracting and workforce development on previous projects.

Multnomah County is using the Construction Manager General Contractor (CMGC) delivery method for this project, where the general contractor is hired during the Design Phase in order to get early input and collaboration from the contractor. This approach provides the engineering team the opportunity to work closely with the contractor to ensure a more efficient construction process.

While the project is actively seeking funding, early construction activities are anticipated to start in 2026, followed by the full bridge closure and reconstruction starting in 2027. The new Burnside Bridge is expected to open as early as 2031.



Environmental Review Phase Concludes with Record of Decision

Multnomah County is pleased to announce, on Friday, Feb. 9, the Federal Highway Administration published in the [Federal Register](#) its [Record of Decision](#) for the [Earthquake Ready Burnside Bridge Project](#). This document is federally required for projects using federal funds and gives the project approval to move forward. The Federal Highway Administration reviewed the project's [Final Environmental Impact Statement](#) before it issued a Record of

Project [Final Environmental Impact Statement](#), before making a Record of Decision. The Record of Decision marks the end of the project's Environmental Review Phase.

The Environmental Review Phase from 2019 to 2023 served an important role in project planning. During this phase, the project team evaluated a range of alternatives that addressed the purpose and need, screened alternatives against a set of evaluation criteria and selected one alternative to advance into the Design Phase. This evaluation process is required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), a federal law enacted in 1970 to ensure that key decisions about transportation projects take into account impacts to people, places and the environment.

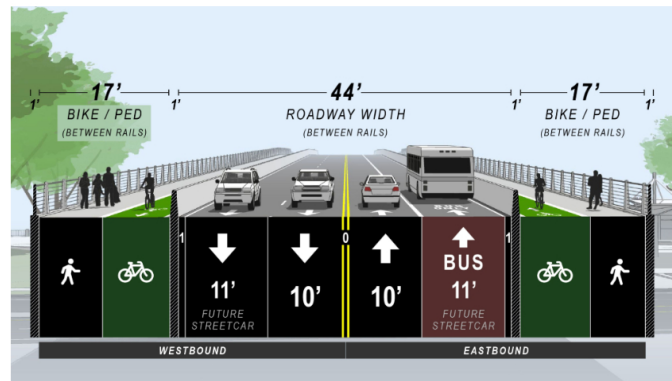
Throughout the Environmental Review Phase, the project team conducted more than 350 briefings with stakeholders and community groups, held 30 Community Task Force meetings, five Policy Group meetings, launched six online open houses and surveys, held 19 Diversity, Equity & Inclusion (DEI) Focus Groups and shared more than 100 social media posts, newsletters and news releases. The project is now advancing a Preferred Alternative thanks to the participation of many community members, elected officials and agency partners.

Final EIS

Future Burnside Bridge will have Widest Bicycle and Pedestrian Paths of any Downtown Bridge

Multnomah County is excited to announce that the future bridge will have 17-foot bike and pedestrian paths, the largest of all downtown Portland bridges. The paths will have crash-worthy barriers separating vehicles from people walking, biking and rolling.

On the new Burnside Bridge there will be two vehicular lanes in both directions (east and west), with one eastbound lane dedicated to buses. Our future climate goals urge us to use our transportation system differently. By reducing vehicular lanes, from five to four, and increasing multi-modal space, the County is designing a bridge to help meet County and City climate goals and increase efficiency for multi-modal usage, while remaining within budget.



(Approved cross section for the future Burnside Bridge.)

Funding Status and Opportunities

The County has been successful in securing multiple sources of funding. To date, the County and local partners have committed to funding \$300 million, through the local vehicle registration fee. In August 2022, the project received a federal \$5 million Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability & Equity (RAISE) Planning Grant. This marked the project's first successful federal funding award. In 2023, the project received \$2 million in Congressionally directed funds, and in summer 2023, the Oregon Legislature directed \$20 million in state funding to the project through House Bill 5030.

The County is actively pursuing various grants and other funding opportunities at the local, state and federal levels to fully fund the project, including grants

at the local, state and federal levels to fully fund the project, including grants from the recently passed Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act. In August 2023, the project submitted an application for the FY 2023-2024 USDOT Multimodal Projects Discretionary Grant (MPDG) Program and a few months later, submitted an application for the FY 2023-2026 USDOT Bridge Investment Program. The project is hopeful that between these two grant opportunities, the federal government can help close the funding gap. In addition, in November 2023, the project also requested up to \$25 million from ODOT's Local Agency Bridge Program.

County, City and TriMet Leaders Tour Burnside Bridge

As the project enters the Design Phase, Multnomah County, City of Portland and TriMet leaders got a firsthand look at bridges maintained by Multnomah County. In late 2023, Multnomah County Chair Jessica Vega Pederson, Portland City Commissioner Mingus Mapps, Portland Bureau of Transportation Director Millicent Williams, TriMet General Manager Sam Desue, Jr. and staff toured the Burnside and Hawthorne bridges.

During their tour, they met bridge operators and learned about the process and duties necessary for opening the bridge for vessels. They also rode to the top of the Hawthorne Bridge to catch some unique city views, and went down into the piers of the Burnside Bridge where they got to see how the two 1,900 ton concrete counterweights work to lift the bridge, getting a live view of the bridge opening from beneath the deck.

The County values strong partnerships with the City of Portland and TriMet and appreciates the time these leaders and elected officials took from their busy schedules to see the inner workings of County bridges.

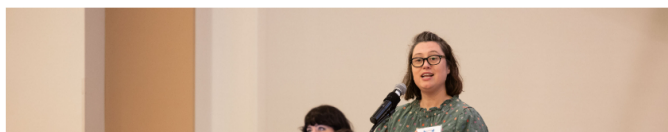


(Pictured from left: Multnomah County Chair Jessica Vega Pederson, Portland Bureau of Transportation Director Millicent Williams, Portland City Commissioner Mingus Mapps, TriMet General Manager Sam Desue, Jr.)

Community Design Advisory Group to Make Recommendations on New Bridge

The County has assembled a group of 21 community members who represent a wide range of interests and backgrounds to make recommendations on the aesthetic features of the new bridge. The Community Design Advisory Group (CDAG) started meeting in late 2023 and will continue through early 2025.

CDAG meetings are typically in-person at the Multnomah Building, are open to the public and are live-streamed and recorded. A public comment period is reserved for public input at each meeting. To learn more about the CDAG, visit the [project website](#). All materials and past recordings can be found [here](#).





(Community Design Advisory Group meeting.)

Stay Involved

Public participation is an essential part of a successful project. We hope that you will follow along and stay engaged throughout the process. There are many ways to follow the project and stay engaged. We encourage you to check the [website](#), [sign-up](#) for newsletters, [watch CDAG meetings](#) or weigh in this summer when we ask the public to share input on a range of bridge type and form options. While the Preferred Alternative has already been selected, there are still more design variations and components to consider. Stay tuned and weigh in!

If you would like the project team to present to your organization, or you would like to book an appointment during office hours, please submit a request to: burnsidebridge@multco.us.

[Join the Email List](#)

In the News!

- [OPB](#): “Portland’s Burnside Bridge to close for 5 years during seismic rebuild, starting in 2027”
- [KOIN](#): “Burnside Bridge construction begins in 2027 for earthquake upgrades”
- [KPTV](#): Live interview with project managers
- [KGW](#): “Burnside Bridge replacement gets federal green light”
- [DJC Oregon](#): “Burnside Bridge replacement project enters design phase”

Fun Fact: Burnside Bridge and Golden Gate Bridge designed by same bridge engineer

One of the engineers for the current Burnside Bridge was also the engineer of the Golden Gate Bridge. Born and raised in Ohio by artist parents, Joseph Strauss grew up to become a famous American structural engineer known for his revolutionary design of bascule bridges (or drawbridges), constructing over 400 bascule bridges across the U.S. While he steered professionally away from his artistic roots, his artist spirit remained strong. Enjoy this lovely poem, [“The Mighty Task is Done”](#) by the great Joseph Strauss. We hope it gives you confidence and belief in the work ahead for the Burnside Bridge as it does for us.



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