



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

BETTER – SAFER – CONNECTED

March 3, 2022

Policy Group Meeting #8

Meeting information

Project: Earthquake Ready Burnside Bridge

Subject: Policy Group, Meeting #8

Date: Thursday, March 03, 2022

Time: 2:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Location: WebEx Virtual Meeting

Attendees:

Policy Group Members:

Co-Chair Deborah Kafoury, Multnomah County Chair
Co-Chair Jessica Vega Pederson, Multnomah County Commissioner
Chris Warner, City of Portland
Councilor Sue Piazza, City of Gresham
Steve Witter, TriMet
Grace Stratton, U.S. Senator Wyden’s Office
Kari Herinckx, U.S. Senator Merkley’s Office
Justin Douglas, Prosper Portland
Rian Windsheimer, ODOT Region 1
Al Bannan, U.S. Representative Bonamici’s Office
Councilor Mary Nolan, Oregon Metro
Representative Barbara Smith Warner, OR State Legislature
Phil Ditzler, FHWA Oregon

Additional Invites:

Jackie Tate, Community Task Force Representative
Susan Lindsay, Community Task Force Representative
Brian Monberg, City of Gresham
Caitlin Reff, City of Portland
Chris Fick, Multnomah County
Jamie Waltz, Multnomah County
Maria Gomez, Representative Smith Warner’s Office
Mike Baker, DEA

Project Team Members:

Megan Neill, MultCo
Mike Pullen, MultCo
Steve Drahota, HDR
Shane Phelps, HDR
Paul Belton, HDR
Cassie Davis, CD Consulting
Jeff Heilman, Parametrix
Allison Brown, JLA
Sarah Omlor, EnviroIssues





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Mike Morrow, Federal Highway Administration
Sharon Daleo, PBOT
Suzanne Carey, DEA
Tate White, Portland Parks and Recreation

Apologies: Policy Group Members:

Senator Kathleen Taylor, OR State Legislature
Liv Brumfield, U.S. Representative Blumenauer’s Office

Summary Notes

This online virtual meeting was held over WebEx and livestreamed to the public. Four 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.

In advance of the meeting, the public was invited to submit comments to the Policy Group (PG). Ten comments received in advance of the meeting were acknowledged in the meeting during the public comment period and attached below.

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

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Allison Brown, JLA, welcomed everyone to the meeting, went over the virtual meeting protocols, took roll call and reviewed the meeting agenda.

OPENING REMARKS

Co-Chair Commissioner Jessica Vega Pederson, Multnomah County, welcomed participants to the meeting and introduced new members Councilor Mary Nolan, Oregon Metro, Councilor Sue Piazza, City of Gresham, and Steve Witter, TriMet, who are replacing their predecessors. She emphasized the importance of preparing the region for a disaster and thanked everyone for their continued participation.

Co-Chair Deborah Kafoury, Multnomah County, seconded Vega Pederson’s remarks and reminded the group how much has happened since the last meeting in October 2020. The project has changed substantially since going through a cost reduction phase and the project team planned to present the public’s opinion on these updates.



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Brown announced Mike Pullen's, Multnomah County, retirement and took a moment to appreciate his role in the project.

PUBLIC COMMENT

In advance of the meeting, the public was invited to submit comments to the PG. Pullen summarized the ten comments that were received:

- John Peck submitted a comment urging the project to consider an innovative bridge span to be a civic landmark.
- Manny Veloso submitted a comment asking why a temporary pontoon bridge option, a model used by the military, wasn't considered as it would be immensely cheaper than building a new bridge.
- Abbie Rogers submitted a comment noting that the fact that other bridges over the Willamette River claim to be earthquake proof when the bridge approaches aren't earthquake proof promotes a false sense of security.
- Justin Avelar submitted a comment urging the project to begin building as soon as possible.
- Michael Keyes submitted a comment asking for money to be spent on roads in east Multnomah County before more infrastructure in the city is built.
- Terry Parker submitted a letter expressing the unfairness of reducing car lanes when car drivers are paying for the cost of the bridge. He feared it is shortsighted to reduce lanes and it will cause more congestion.
- Seneca Pilot submitted a comment questioning the project's multiyear timeline when compared with the impending effects of climate change.
- Peter Ferreira-Gandolfo submitted a comment urging the project to paint the bridge a natural, dark color to deter graffiti as much as possible.
- Joe Cullen submitted a comment urging the project to do its part in incentivizing bicycle use to reduce gas emissions, especially now that electric bikes and scooters make it easier for people to use.
- Brent K. Elliot submitted a comment expressing the importance of smooth traffic flow to not increase emissions due to idling vehicles.

PROJECT UPDATE

Megan Neill, Multnomah County's project manager, reviewed the project schedule since the group last met. After the cost reduction analysis, a year has been added to the timeline. The project will publish



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the Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) by the end of the year and the Design Phase will begin this year. As long as the project finds funding, construction is set for 2025.

The project team recently met with the City Council where they received unanimous support for the project. The Council approved an intergovernmental agreement between the City and the County to continue working together moving forward. The City Council has also approved funds to develop a cost estimate for the Human Access Project's ramp proposal to connect the bridge with the Eastbank Esplanade and study other ramp options. The project will continue coordinating with the City on this.

Neill reviewed the PG's decision from their last meeting to approve the Preferred Alternative which included the replacement Long Span Bridge and full closure for traffic during construction.

Neill explained the cost reduction analysis that was recently completed. Since the 2020 DEIS cost estimate of \$800 - \$965 million, multiple factors have changed: most notably, failure of the 2020 Regional Transportation Bond Measure which would have allocated \$150 million to the project, COVID impacts to workforce and material availability and 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.

She 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

REVIEW PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE REFINEMENTS, COMMUNITY INPUT & CTF TESTIMONY

Review PA Refinements & Community Input

Pullen gave an overview of the recent round of public outreach. The three primary methods of outreach were: briefings, the online open house/survey, and Diversity, Equity & Inclusion (DEI) outreach through the Community Engagement Liaison program. He reviewed a detailed list of outreach outcomes:

- 45+ Briefings to agencies, individuals, & organizations
- 8 Diverse community discussion groups
- 4,000+ Unique visitors to the online open house and survey



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- 1,500+ Survey responses
- 6 Language translations of the online open house and materials
- 21 Social media posts and advertisements
- 3,466 Project e-newsletter recipients
- 10 News releases and e-newsletters (from project & others)
- 11 Media stories

Steve Drahota, HDR, shared a summary of the community's input on the bridge options:

MOVABLE SPAN BRIDGE TYPE

- Strong preference for bascule design over vertical lift
- Strong interest in preserving open views
- Interest in saving project costs

WEST APPROACH BRIDGE TYPE

- Strong support for how girder option preserves views
- Support for girder to save cost
- Support for girder to retain similar look and feel of current bridge

BRIDGE WIDTH

- Support for reducing overall bridge width to get project built
- Concern with removing a vehicle lane because of safety, traffic, freight, and emergency response
- Strong interest in retaining a fifth vehicle lane pending funding
- Support for bike/ped reduction with some interest in 20' width

Listen to CTF Comments

Brown explained the CTF's voting process using a thumbs up, down, or to the side - meaning they support, oppose, or can accept the measure, respectively. She noted that the CTF decided to vote separately on each cost saving measure rather than vote as a package. This resulted in unanimous support for the bascule moveable span, unanimous support for the westside girder, and four in support, nine accepting the measure and three opposed to the reduced bridge width.

Susan Lindsay, Community Task Force Representative, shared a video testimony about the CTF's decision to recommend the package of three refinements to the Preferred Alternative. She said everything was agreeable to the CTF except for the lane reduction which is a big concern to many in the group. The CTF hopes that funding can be found to build the initially studied bridge width because they fear the traffic impacts will be an issue and feel that the additional capacity will be most helpful in an emergency situation. However, they voted to recommend the measures because they believe the project needs to be constructed above all else.



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Jackie Tate, Community Task Force representative, agreed with Lindsay's statement sharing that the CTF wants the bridge to be constructed if the choice is between a smaller bridge or no bridge at all. Everyone would prefer the higher capacity bridge should the option become available.

PG Discussion

- Representative Barbara Smith Warner, OR State Legislature, advocated for the reversible lane noting they are common in Washington DC and urged the future streetcar lane be shared with the bus only lane to keep transit options together to save space.
- Rian Windsheimer, ODOT Region 1, said although he understands the need to shrink the bridge, it is concerning to do this on a major arterial through the city. The traffic impact studies have showed that diversion to other bridges and roads won't create a major inconvenience, but he worries about what could happen if there is a mistake in the studies.
- Steve Witter, TriMet, thanked the project team and wished Mike Pullen congratulations. He seconded Smith Warner's idea to have a shared transit lane once the streetcar is added. He noted that the project options should be well documented in case the economy swings back to normal and the original design could be afforded. He also said that while the Burnside Bridge is relatively low profile in design, it still includes striking detail and the final design of the new bridge should reflect that.

PG Approval of Preferred Alternative Refinements

Brown reminded members that they had the option to vote in support of the recommendations, in opposition, or to abstain. She asked each PG member if they approved the CTF's recommendation on the package of 3 refinements to the Preferred Alternative.

- Representative Barbara Smith Warner, OR State Legislature – Support
- Chris Warner, City of Portland – Support
 - Warner noted the design for traffic impacts needs to be thoughtful.
- Co-Chair Deborah Kafoury, Multnomah County – Support
 - Kafoury agreed with Smith Warner's earlier points.
- Co-Chair Commissioner Jessica Vega Pederson, Multnomah County – Support
 - Vega Pederson appreciated the concern for traffic but the project needs to move forward.
- Justin Douglas, Prosper Portland – Support
 - Douglas thanked the CTF for their difficult decision in making a recommendation.
- Phil Ditzler, FHWA Oregon – Abstain



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- Ditzler noted that FHWA was a non-voting member, but thanked everyone for their work to date and applauded the thoroughness of the process.
- Councilor Mary Nolan, Oregon Metro - Support
 - Nolan has no hesitation on reducing the bridge width.
- Councilor Sue Piazza, City of Gresham – Support
 - Piazza thanked the team for the project briefing to feel prepared to make a recommendation.
- Grace Stratton, U.S. Senator Wyden’s Office – Abstain
 - Stratton added that while federal offices abstain from final votes, they appreciate the process.
- Kari Herinckx, U.S. Senator Merkley’s Office - Abstain
 - Herinckx thanked the team for the briefing offer.
- Al Bannan, U.S. Representative Bonamici’s Office – Abstain
- Rian Windsheimer, ODOT Region 1 – Support
 - Windsheimer is in support but has reservations about width reduction.
- Steve Whitter, TriMet – Support

Brown noted that staff from Senator Kathleen Taylor’s office, OR State Legislature, and U.S. Representative Blumenauer’s Office were not present at the meeting.

Vega Pederson thanked the project team and all the participants for their work getting to this point and congratulated the team on this milestone.

NEXT STEPS AND CLOSING REMARKS

Neill shared an update on the County’s search for project funding. There are currently multiple national, state, and local funding opportunities that the project will be focusing on in 2022, including:

- **\$12.5B Bridge Investment Program Grant**
- **\$8.78B Promoting Resilient Operations for Transformative, Efficient, and Cost-saving Transportation (PROTECT) Program** - State formula and grant funding supporting resilient transportation systems. This includes funding for evacuation routes, coastal resilience, making existing infrastructure more resilient, etc.
- **\$15B Megaprojects Grant Program** - Dedicated funding to support large, multimodal, multijurisdictional projects that are critical to our economy, but too large or complex for existing funding programs.



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- **\$15B Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE)** - Grant funding program supporting surface transportation projects of local and/or regional significance.
- **Potential Regional Transportation Measure in 2024**

Brown reviewed upcoming meetings:

- March 17th: Multnomah County Board of County Commissioners (BCC) meeting
- May 2022: Publication of Supplemental Draft EIS and public comment period
- December 2022: Final EIS and Record of Decision

ADJOURN

Brown thanked participants and adjourned the meeting. No action items recorded.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

From: John Peck

I'm okay with most of the bridge cost savings measures, and don't mind the reduced traffic capacity. I would like all of Burnside through downtown to get a road diet. It is not at all pedestrian friendly in its current form. But . . .

There is a huge missed opportunity that could be addressed with some additional design fees. Other cities' bridge replacement projects like LA's 6th Street Viaduct by Michael Maltzan and HNTB or D.C.'s Frederick Douglass Bridge by AECOM and its partner park bridge by OMA / OLIN have harnessed the best in architecture, engineering, and urban design talent to create innovative bridges and parks that aspire to create 21st Century civic landmarks. While Multnomah County's current focus appears to be on cost savings or value engineering, let's use some of that savings to tweak the span design into something more innovative and less lackluster. We are a city defined by its bridges. Let's not squander this opportunity.

Sincerely,

John C. Peck (SE Portland resident)

From: Manny Veloso

Instead of making a bridge that can withstand a large earthquake, why not have a bridge (or bridges) that can be erected quickly once the earthquake is done?

Just store a few pontoon bridges along the river and when the bridges collapse throw a pontoon bridge across. The big benefit is they can be erected anywhere. With normal bridges you need to reinforce the bridgeheads as well, and reaching/operating the bridge will be difficult to do when the surrounding infrastructure is destroyed. With a pontoon bridge you can find an area with river access on both sides.

It will also cost orders of magnitude less.

From: Abbie Rogers

I just wanted to state that that to my knowledge although tilikum bridge and the sellwood bridge has been 'earthquake proofed' it is a false sense of security that comes at a huge price tag....

in my humble opinion it does very little good if yes while the bridge itself may be able to move and bounce back in a flexible way... if you do not actually create the on and off ramps to the bridge to also be 'earthquake proof' it seems like a high cost to only potentially keep people that are on top of the bridge safe- but then how do we have enough systems in place to get them off the bridge?

also if the measure is trying to keep the river safer for travel and dispersal of goods- you'd have to do this for every single bridge otherwise what is the point of spending all this money?

it is infuriating to myself that while monies are set aside to help with 'future' disasters... no one has actually made a solid plan to help the houselessness, and other inequities that are way beyond disaster zone in my opinion. if you can't use the funds set aside to help those that aren't housed, or are on the very brink of being unhoused... as well as the deplorable state of supposed safety nets within the housing system itself... there's really no point in making a pretense of protecting portland from the 'big one' ...

the way in which these other matters are being handled, including the inequity that is rampant in our government, policing, jail systems, and mental health systems- you may as well let the 'big one' come... and let nature take her course... bringing the have and have nots to an equal playing field...

this way... people will die- population control, houses will be ripped apart, buildings destroyed... supplies unavailable...

but maybe then we can actually come together for a common goal of rebuilding rather than constantly divisive to our fellow human beings...

in all honesty - spending money to ensure that every human here will have access to actual emergency supplies... including signs in windows to account for number of people stuck, or needing help... a way that insurances or clinics can make sure each person has access to life saving medication, water, warming blankets, shelter, food etc... these are practical steps you can take as a county that would help more individuals versus making people feel better that 3 bridges might still be standing when an earthquake comes...

From: Justin Avelar

Please get the ball rolling as soon as possible. We have waited too long for this to get started. Thanks for all you do!

From: Michael Keyes

My vote is a no deal until you Repair the roads in East County, we are all tired of being forgotten! Some roads have been in poor shape for 20 Years. It's always been about Portland and no one else!

Michael Keyes

Troutdale

From: Terry Parker

To the Burnside Bridge Policy Group;

In the mid-1960s, the population of Portland was about a third of what it is today. The Burnside Bridge had six full service lanes. The two center lanes were reversible which created four lanes in one direction during the peak morning and evening commutes.

Now today after several years of study and proposed designs to replace the aging Burnside Bridge with an earthquake resistant new bridge, Multnomah County is looking for ways to reduce the costs of the preferred option and design. One of the proposals on the table is to narrow the bridge reducing the number of lanes for motorists to a total of three lanes, a bus only lane, two excessively wide bike lanes (one in each direction) and sidewalks thereby making less than 50% of the deck space for use by cars and trucks, but with all the local funding coming from drivers. **This is unacceptable in more ways than one!**

First, equity is absent. In an age where "accountability" is the word of the decade, it is dictatorial socialism and a form of discrimination to exploit and unethically fleece drivers for all the local costs. This type of government social engineering needs to come to an end. Instead of treating freeloading bicyclists and transit users that only pay 25% of the operating costs as elite supremacists; the time has come for bicyclists and transit users to accept some responsibility by being taxed to pay their own way for the exclusive private lanes and therefore privileged infrastructure that is being proposed.

Secondly, even though population growth is the underlying cause of climate change, Portland's and the regional population is likely to continue to grow. Reducing the motor vehicle capacity and the number of full service traffic lanes is short-sighted and will only create more traffic congestion which in turn will add to fuel consumption and more emissions. If one of the cost reductions agreed upon is to construct a narrower bridge than the preferred option and design, then the bus only lane needs to be eliminated and replaced with a full service lane that can accommodate all motor vehicle traffic including buses.

Furthermore, maintaining a vibrant economy in Portland is based on population growth. Nearly 10% of the jobs in the U. S. and similarly in Oregon are associated with the auto industry. The local government car hater mindset must come to an end! There should be no expectation for people to be herded like cattle onto mass transit. Democracy is about personal choice and freedom which **must** not be negatively impacted by the over taxation of the motoring public. That only leads to higher rates of inflation which includes the costs of transporting food and materials, the latter of which also impacts the rising costs of constructing new housing.

Respectively submitted,

Terry Parker
Northeast Portland

From: Seneca Pilot

I'd like my pov discussed, why spend hundreds of millions of dollars on a bridge that's going to take years to build when according to AOC we're all going to be dead from climate change in (by her own time schedule) less then eight years. Please explain to me.

From: Peter Ferreira-Gandolfo

If any part is steal like the other bridges make it more natural color like a dark or medium green. Also make it harder so vandals can't graffiti it or are deterred away once completed.

Kind Regards,

Peter Ferreira-Gandolfo

From: Joe Cullen

We all know that when more people bike instead of drive, carbon emissions and noise pollution are reduced. Plus e-bikes are taking off and will become more popular as Portland's infrastructure becomes safer and more efficient. Incentivize the public to ride bicycles instead of driving by prioritizing bike lanes on all bridges!

Warm regards,
Joe

From: Brent K. Elliott

Burnside bridge replacement should be like for like.

I ride my bike and drive a vehicle when on call

This bridge needs to carry traffic and excess when other options are not available.

Automobile traffic needs to flow as smoothly as possible to reduce emissions, restrictions increase emissions and global warming.