



**Interstate
BRIDGE**
Replacement Program



Centering Equity

Large transportation infrastructure projects have historically harmed many low-income communities and communities of color. The Interstate Bridge Replacement program (IBR) is committed to centering equity in all aspects of work to not only avoid further harm to equity priority communities, but also ensure they have a voice to help shape program work and realize economic and transportation benefits.

Equity priority communities for the IBR program include:

- ▶ Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC)
- ▶ People with disabilities
- ▶ Communities with limited English proficiency (LEP)
- ▶ Lower income and houseless individuals and families
- ▶ Immigrants and refugees
- ▶ Young people and older adults

“Equity is the center of what we are advancing in the Interstate Bridge Replacement program. It is the way in which we are outreach and engaging with our diverse communities.”

– Johnell Bell, Principal Equity Officer



Ongoing, extensive, and inclusive public dialogue is critical to developing a bridge solution that best serves the complex needs of communities in Oregon and Washington. To support these goals, the program formed four program advisory groups to provide feedback and recommendations: the Executive Steering Group, Equity Advisory Group, Community Advisory Group, and Community Benefits Advisory Group.

Equity Advisory Group

The Equity Advisory Group (EAG) makes recommendations to program leadership regarding processes, policies, and decisions that have the potential to affect equity priority communities. Membership includes partner agency staff, community-based organization representatives, and community members from Oregon and Washington with diverse backgrounds, abilities, and perspectives.

Community Benefits Advisory Group

In 2023, the program launched a Community Benefits Advisory Group (CBAG), whose goal is centered around the mitigation of impacts to neighborhood and businesses in the program area during construction. The CBAG will develop recommendations for community benefit efforts to achieve the greatest positive outcome to communities in the program area and broader region.

EAG Work to Date

- ▶ Established an operable definition of equity for the program in terms of both process and outcomes.
- ▶ Developed an Equity Framework, outlining the program’s approach to equity and the resources it will use to advance equity.
- ▶ Ongoing collaboration to support equitable community engagement strategies.
- ▶ Ensured application of the Equity Framework to the development of the Modified Locally Preferred Alternative.
- ▶ Equity focused key performance indicators that created measurable goals within each category of the equity framework to identify ways to measure success.



Equity-Centered Community Engagement

Beyond the EAG, the program applies an equity lens for all community engagement activities. This includes offering a number of ways to engage the program, meeting people where they are, and taking intentional measures to improve accessibility and reduce barriers to participation.

Equity-centered community engagement tools:

- ▶ Live closed captioning services in English and Spanish, and American Sign Language interpretation provided at public meeting and engagement events
- ▶ Multilingual event options with simultaneous translation
- ▶ Survey user testing with blind and low-vision communities
- ▶ Translation of materials into 8 languages; additional translation provided as requested

- ▶ ADA remediation of documents and presentations—to ensure compatibility with screen reader software
- ▶ In person and online events including office hours, affinity listening sessions, open houses, equity roundtables, and neighborhood forums
- ▶ Partnerships with community-based organizations serving equity priority communities in Oregon and Washington
- ▶ Participation incentives for equity priority participant
- ▶ Production of 3-D physical models to assist blind and low vision community members
- ▶ Host quarterly equity roundtable discussions

Through comprehensive and equitable community engagement, the IBR program is pursuing multimodal investments that will prioritize safety, reflect community values, address community concerns and foster broad regional support.

Community Partnerships

Partnerships with Oregon and Washington community-based organizations help the program reach equity priority community members who have historically been excluded from the public input process on large infrastructure projects. These organizations have deep connections to local communities and strong existing relationships that allow the program to gather meaningful and targeted feedback.

In August 2021, a small-scale, low-barrier grant program was announced and applications solicited from community-based organizations who serve or represent equity priority communities, have an office or members located in the region, have multiple modes of engagement with their members, have experience in community organizing, and are an incorporated nonprofit organization. Since 2021, the IBR program has held two rounds of grant applications and awarded funding to 17 organizations to assist with outreach and engagement activities.

All past and current community partners include:

- ▶ Activate Inclusion
- ▶ Washington Advocates of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing
- ▶ Partners in Career
- ▶ The Street Trust
- ▶ Next Up!
- ▶ Coalition of Communities of Color
- ▶ Odyssey World International Education Services
- ▶ Soul District Business Association
- ▶ Brown Hope
- ▶ Somali American Council of Oregon
- ▶ Unite Oregon
- ▶ Slavic Community Center of NW
- ▶ NW Association of Blind Athletes
- ▶ Cada Casa International Education Services
- ▶ Independent Living Resources
- ▶ NAMI SW Washington
- ▶ Sakura 39ers Youth Association

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