

COMMUNITY ADVISORY GROUP MEETING #9

HIGH-LEVEL MEETING SUMMARY

Subject: Community Advisory Group Meeting #9 Summary

Date and Time: August 5, 2021 4:00 to 6:00 P.M.

Location: Zoom Webinar and YouTube Livestream

WELCOME & OUTCOMES

Ed Washington, CAG co-chair, welcomed the group and reviewed the agenda. Johnell Bell, IBR Team, reviewed the technical instructions for the meeting and provided virtual meeting participation tips.

BRIDGE STORIES VIDEO

The CAG viewed the newest Bridge Stories Video starring CAG member Sam Kim.

PROGRAM UPDATE

Greg Johnson, IBR program Administrator, provided an update on the IBR program. Greg discussed ongoing conversations with the bi-state legislative group, and that the program will start having monthly meetings with the group starting in September so that they can understand the process and the modeling. Greg noted that the program is starting to get into a more detailed phase, and that the CAG will remain intimately involved as the program starts to work on data and modeling. The program is also continuing small group meetings with transit partners to discuss what type of high-capacity transit will be used. Looking forward, CAG members should expect that they may be called on to talk with the bi-state legislative group on how their involvement has shaped the program. The program will take the IBR Solution to the bi-state legislative group in late March.

IBR PROGRAM DECISIONS, TIMELINE AND DESIGN OPTIONS

Alex Prentiss, IBR Team, presented on what IBR's "North Star" targets are and how IBR will get there, with a focus on how screening criteria and design options work together.

CAG Member: Are the designs shown based on the Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA)? And can CAG members have a copy of the LPA design?

- Alex: Yes. What was shown was based off of the previous LPA as a starting point and we can definitely send you the designs. The LPA is part of the public record.
- Brad Phillips, IBR Design Team: The LPA from 2014 is where the current IBR program is starting from but we'll be looking at different options to address changes.

CAG Member: Is the current alignment curving left fixed?

- Brad: Yes in this picture, but we are still exploring configurations and the alignment.

CAG Member: A suggestion for language use going forward- avoid saying a "new river crossing" as it is not a completely new river crossing, it is a replacement.

- Alex: Thank you, we will make that adjustment.

Greg Johnson: Can you please tell us about the possibility of having a stacked bridge?

- Brad: When we use the terminology stacked its confusing as the previous LPA was also stacked. It had roadway on top and the shared use path and transit on the bottom. But from a width perspective, that was really two bridges, one carrying southbound traffic with transit underneath and one carrying northbound traffic with the shared use path underneath. What Greg is referring to is an option that would put northbound and southbound on top of each other with transit and the shared use path hanging off to the side. The benefit of that is that it's a bit narrower and also would be on one structure. The complication is in getting the stacked roadways back to side by side as they get on land. Benefit is that it would be narrower over the river and might provide some flexibility for the transit and shared use path options as they get off the bridge.

CAG Member: How does the recent infrastructure bill impact this project?

- Greg: We are having dialogue with congressional offices from both WA and OR and have been making our case for why this project is unique. We are very excited about potentially having IBR being identified in the infrastructure bill. We want to explore all funding avenues.

CAG Member: Is the feedback you're looking for just general reactions or are there specific areas?

- Greg: We will be asking very specific questions. We are going to have community working groups doing a deep dive and some CAG members will be participating in that. Some of those questions will be deep dive into the specifics of what an active transportation path looks like, where we need to make better and safer connections. Questions like that are going to be very germane to putting forth the IBR Solution and we will need input from CAG members.

CAG Member: What is the working proposal for height? Are the large tugs and sailboats going to be able to go under it and how does that tie in with the railroad bridge?

- Brad: There are extensive waterborne use studies done previously which are being updated now. Along with that are what channels in the river they are using so that it lines up correctly with the railroad bridge open. Should be done early next year. That will determine the height. Last time it was 116 feet, but we will not know for sure until the studies are complete.

CAG Member: How are we interconnecting or working with the I-5 Rose Quarter project? As it is all the same highway, and it can also back up.

- Greg: We are working very closely with the Office of Urban Mobility that the Rose Quarter expansion project falls under, they are a part of ODOT, and we talk with them on a regular basis about what's going on. We actually just met with some of their folks yesterday. We understand the nature of what they're doing and how that will impact us.

IBR CLIMATE FRAMEWORK

Sarah Ogier, IBR Principal Climate Officer, presented on the climate framework that is being developed and will ultimately be used to screen design options and identify performance measures.

CAG Member: Thank you for sharing, as part of this framework will there be a way to grade different construction companies to be sure they are working with climate and equity in mind? In addition to other considerations like workers safety and care?

- Sarah: There are definitely ways for us to put performance expectations in the contracts we use but also inclusivity is an important aspect.
- Greg: We are planning to have a diverse set of contractors, probably over 15 different contractors. Construction always consists of carrots and sticks; I am a strong believer in carrots leading to stronger compliance so we will be writing incentives into the contracts.

CAG Member: OR and WA have some pretty aggressive clean energy targets, my question is at what point do you begin to look at incentivizing electrification of transportation in line with those targets? Are you thinking about those now and if not, when would you be?

- Sarah: We are assuming we will have more electric vehicles and ensure that they will work and be successful on the bridge we are designing. There are other larger projects that are doing more for the incentivizing rather than one singular stretch of road.
- Greg: Equity is important to think about as lower income folks tend to hold onto older vehicles longer and can't afford an electric car, so we have to make sure we're not just making a separate lane for the wealthy. We are looking at ways to do this equitably, but also, we are only a 5-mile corridor.

CAG Member: Thank you for the very thorough presentation. When thinking about existing conditions and the shift towards telecommuting as a result of COVID-19, can you provide some insight into how you are approaching the analysis of what is obviously a shifting analysis?

- Greg: Traffic is pretty elastic, meaning that folks will snap back to normal after something happens. We want to be careful, but we are looking at some of the national work that is being done and if it changes some of our projects, it will be factored into the number of lanes and capacity of the bridge overall.
- Sarah: From a climate perspective, we are thinking long term. We may be looking at today, but we are designing infrastructure for 50+ years.

CAG Member: When you talk about plantings, are you talking about a large green space or plantings along the side of the road?

- Sarah: There are opportunities for both, we are in the early stages of environment and planning work.
- Greg: Interchanges are a great opportunity for plantings, but also we can take off site locations, purchase those, and use them to increase our planting footprint. If we can't achieve our goals through just the 5-mile corridor there are other options for mitigation of greenhouse gas production.

CAG Member: As far as electric cars, VW and GM have both said they are transitioning to solely electric cars, I'm glad that's staying in. I am wondering though about in equity working with tradesmen, and community

colleges, and this is such an opportunity to improve the lives of people and that hasn't been superseded by just staying local. The other question I have is about salmon, at construction how the salmon will be protected during their 4 migration periods each year.

- Sarah: Yes, all of those are things we are considering. My presentation was not fully inclusive of everything in the environmental realm on this project. Most definitely we will be trying to protect the salmon and that will be a part of the environmental review process. And my slide was solely an example, those options are still on the table.
- Greg: Yes, we know there will be numerous contracts. We are looking to make sure there are equitable solutions for small business, minority and women owned businesses. But we also recognize the expertise needed for the work that will attract national firms. This will be a mix of that. Just because it's not mentioned doesn't mean we're not thinking about it. And as we begin to think about labor agreements you will see those come up in this forum. But first we have to get to the IBR Solution.

CAG Member: When you talk about changing behavior, and specifically congestion pricing, the analysis of that really needs to be robust as lower income folks don't have the same flexibility in work location and hours.

- Lynn: At the ESG level this topic receives attention, so I'm confident the program will dive in on all the options related to this.

CAG Member: How do you have zero waste from the demolition?

- Sarah: Any materials that have remaining economic value will be repurposed and I have seen it done effectively on other large projects.

CAG Member: At Clark College we very much want to be a part of this conversation including how we engage our staff and students. No question, just a comment.

- Greg: This year we brought on 12 interns to the IBR program ranging from high school juniors to seniors in college. We will be looking to expand that as the program goes on and partnering with the local colleges will be important.
- Lynn: WSU Vancouver would also be interested in partnering. By group consensus we are going to move the presentation on the equity framework to the following meeting so that it has the proper amount of time.

CAG Member: Thank you Sarah for the wonderful presentation and thank you Tom for bringing up the salmon. For those of you who know me I am a member of the Cowlitz Indian Tribal Council and I was thinking about that very same thing. How are we going to make sure we are considering our swimmers, our flyers and our walkers along the river? I didn't have much of a question, but I look forward to getting to a space where we're having these conversations and are creating a plan to mitigate any issues. Not only in this area but up and down the river.

- Greg: We have been having conversations with the tribal governments in the region and their most important issue has been the natural resources that exist in the Columbia River and the protection of the Columbia River as we move forward. This is an iconic river, and we will have scrutiny on countless things so we will be looking at cutting edge things to make our construction in the river the least impactful. We won't be allowed in the river to do work during certain time periods. We are going to have a very in-depth permitting process in order to demonstrate that we are doing the right things and the smart things as we construct this program.

PROGRAM UPDATES

Greg Johnson addressed the many comments on social media of people putting forward alternative solutions. He discussed three of the alternatives that have previously been dismissed. Greg told the group that the program sees and hears these comments and has investigated these comments to make sure these ideas had a fair hearing, and that they do not meet the Purpose and Need for this program. Greg noted that the IBR team spent time talking to folks about an Immersed Tube Tunnel (ITT). Greg noted that ITT is a legitimate technology, but it does not fit given the set of circumstances, with the BNSF rail bridge to the north and having to come back up to grade at Hayden Island and connecting SR-14 back. It does not meet the Purpose and Need of this project. Second is the "Common Sense Alternative II". Greg noted that it is an idea that has merit, and a lot of thinking went into it but retrofitting the BNSF bridge to the west and then building two other bridges crossing the Columbia River will not be possible. Greg noted that we are already having enough trouble getting one bridge built and still the I-5 issue is not solved. The Common Sense Alternative causes more disruption to the region. Finally, there are the folks advocating for a third bridge. There is merit to that discussion, but it does not address the problems in the I-5 corridor. It would not attract enough traffic away from I-5. You still have a 104-year-old bridge and 140,000 cars trying to cross the I-5 bridge each day. Greg noted that we are not ignoring these comments and we are responding to these issues.

CAG Member: I have a question about the 140,000 number of cars Greg just said are crossing the bridge, is that daily?

- Greg: Yes, that is daily, and it is my understanding that that is the 2019 count from our traffic counters in the area.

CAG Member: Did those numbers seem realistic to you for future growth or are we having those numbers updated?

- Greg: We are going to create updated models and projections based on land use plans for both sides of the river. The metropolitan areas have growth projects as well which we will be using. The DOTs are trying to think ahead and build a smarter roadway that is adaptable to future conditions.

CAG Member: Does managing existing spaces better mean the footprint size will not be decreased?

- Greg: One of the things that causes all the issues are the 7 interchanges in a 5-mile space. This causes friction for the through traffic and leads to backups and safety issues. Multiply this by the other decisions and things people need to make rather quickly. One of the ways to solve that is to have auxiliary lanes that take the merge and weave movements out of the flow of traffic. That is one of the things we'll model at different levels. Currently safety shoulders don't exist on the bridge so if something's wrong one whole lane is completely gone. Having the safety shoulder so that vehicles don't have to block the lane, that will be a tremendous help. But creating those safety shoulders takes space. We are going to model and ensure we're doing the smart thing.

CAG Member: If you're someone who has to build on, over, or near water there are extensive state, federal, and local ordinances in place. From my understanding this will be a highly scrutinized project and all impacts will be studied and mitigated to ensure the project works for everyone and the environment.

- Greg: I couldn't have said that better myself, thank you. This will be a model project; the Columbia is one of the largest rivers in the country and we will treat it with the respect it is due. We won't have a contractor doing stupid things and will protect the wonderful resource that we have.

CAG Member: As an industry representative I want to remind people that trucks and freight don't have an alternative, so we need to keep that in mind when discussing a smaller footprint.

PUBLIC COMMENT

1-503-283-8615: I'm with the AORTA, the association of Oregon Rail and Transit Advocates. Version II of the CSA includes a new freeway bridge so I just wanted to correct that statement by Greg Johnson earlier and of course we are well aware the railroad bridge is owned by the railroads but we assume the railroads would be open to negotiating.

WHAT’S NEXT?

Lisa Keohokalole Schauer, CAG co-facilitator, alerted the group to the upcoming EAG and ESG meetings in August and September respectively as well as what’s on the agenda for the next CAG meeting. Lisa reminded everyone that this work is important, and they want to give everyone a chance to come, listen, absorb, and weigh in. Lisa let everyone know that Elevating Equity Listening Sessions are starting, with the first the previous night. The mini grant program is launching, and applications are open until August 13.

ADJOURN

Ed thanked CAG members for their contributions to the meeting today and hopes people will continue to be as thoughtful moving forward.

The meeting adjourned at 6:00 pm.

MEETING PARTICIPANTS

CAG Members or Alternatives

Attendees	Organization
Andrew Hoan	Portland Business Alliance
Bill Prows	Oregon Association of Minority Entrepreneurs
Dena Horton	Pacific Northwest Waterways Association
Ed Washington	Co-Chair
Irina Phillips	At-large
Jana Jarvis	OR Trucking Association
Jasmine Tolbert	Vancouver NAACP
Kevin Perkey	Workforce SW WA
Lynn Valenter	Co-Chair

Attendees	Organization
Martha Wiley	WA Transit Representative
Michael A. Martin-Tellis	Vancouver Neighborhood Association
Michael Kelly	Human Services Council
Michelle Brewer	Columbia River Economic Development Council
Robin Richardson	At-large
Ryan Webb	Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde
Sam Kim	At-large
Sheri Call	WA Trucking Association
Tom Hickey	Bridgeton Neighborhood Association
Victor Caesar	OR Transit Representative
Whitney Mosback	Cowlitz Indian Tribe
Jeffery Temple	Fred Meyer

Facilitators and Presenters

Attendees	Organization
Jason Hagen	IBR program Staff
Greg Johnson	IBR program Administrator
Alex Prentiss	IBR program Team
Frank Green	IBR Assistant program Administrator
Lisa Keohokalole Schauer	IBR CAG Co-Facilitator

Attendees	Organization
Brad Phillips	IBR Design Team
Johnell Bell	IBR CAG Co-Facilitator

Additional Participants

46 members of the public, partner agency staff, and the IBR Team viewed the meeting via the Zoom webinar and the YouTube livestream during the meeting.

MEETING RECORD AND MATERIALS

Meeting Recording

A recording of the meeting is available here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fdzqx5Hap2c>

Meeting Materials

The meeting materials are available here:

<https://www.interstatebridge.org/get-involved-folder/calendar/cag-august-5-2021-meeting/>