

EVENT SUMMARY: Freight Movement Listening Session

The Interstate Bridge Replacement program is committed to engaging in two-way conversations with the community. Listening sessions are one of the tools the program is using to have targeted discussions with members of the community to gain insights on specific topics. The following is a high-level summary of the feedback captured during breakout session conversations and live audience participation survey responses during the Freight Movement Listening Session held on May 27, 2021.

The Freight Movement Listening Session was attended by 46 people. Both truck and marine freight interests were present with 67% of participants indicating they use a truck as their primary mode and 11% of participants indicating they use a marine vessel as their primary mode of transportation to move freight through the Interstate Bridge program area. Sixty-two percent of participants transport freight across or under the Interstate Bridge multiple times per day and the majority of participants (46%) travel over 50 miles when hauling freight across the Interstate Bridge. Congestion is the most common issue people experience when transporting freight through the program area. Participants told us congestion through the I-5 corridor increases their operational costs and negatively impacts their ability to attract and retain employees. For marine freight, challenges include bridge lift restrictions and travel paths. Suggestions for improving the freight transport experience include add truck-only lanes, remove current height restrictions, reduce the number of on/off ramps, and eliminate bridge lifts, as well as suggestions for how to maximize vehicle use on the bridge. Participants emphasized the importance of unimpaired freight movement through the I-5 corridor in order to support local, regional, and national community needs.

AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION QUESTION RESPONSES

- **What is the primary mode of transportation you use to move freight through the Interstate Bridge program area?**
 - Truck (67%)
 - Marine vessel (11%)
 - Rail (0%)
 - Air (0%)
 - Other (4%)
 - None (19%)
- **What type of freight trip do you make through the Interstate Bridge program area?**
 - Long haul heavy freight (33%)
 - Local distribution heavy freight (29%)
 - Delivery (4%)
 - Marine (13%)
 - Other (21%)
- **On average, what is the typical distance of your freight trip across the Interstate Bridge (pre-COVID)?**
 - 1-5 miles (0%)
 - 6-10 miles (8%)

- 11-20 miles (8%)
 - 21-30 miles (4%)
 - 31-50 miles (8%)
 - Over 50 miles (46%)
 - Doesn't apply to me (25%)
- **On average, how many freight trips do you take across (or under) the Interstate Bridge?**
 - Multiple times per day (62%)
 - Daily (5%)
 - 2-4 times per week (10%)
 - Once a week (0%)
 - 2-3 times per month (5%)
 - Once a month (0%)
 - Couple times a year (19%)
- **Is this the first time you have engaged with the program?**
 - Yes (41%)
 - No (59%)
- **How would you like to be engaged in the future?**
 - Host virtual or in-person events (68%)
 - Use social media (8%)
 - Provide access to team members (office hours) (32%)
 - Seek input through surveys (28%)
 - Other (8%)
- **Which of the following digital tools do you use to get program information?**
 - Program newsletter and website (96%)
 - Facebook (28%)
 - Instagram (4%)
 - Twitter (4%)
 - YouTube (12%)
 - None of the above (4%)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

What are the issues you experience while traveling across (or under) the Interstate Bridge and on I-5 between SR 500 and Columbia Blvd? If you use any of the program area interchanges, what are the issues you experience at those interchanges?

- Move critical infrastructure (wind turbines, etc.) and forced to use I-205 because of height and weight limitations. Congestion runs up against hours of service. More congestion = less time to drive truck. Can only make one trip across the bridge but wants to make more. Finding it hard to attract employees from Washington (especially those who commute across the bridge). Congestion negatively affects mental health of employees.
- Business is located near Marine Drive and primary route is I-5. Congestion affects operations negatively (extra hour to get on freeway). Impacts employee commute as well. They are traveling two

miles but have to plan when to get on bridge and will shift operations to I-205 to avoid I-5 even though they are closer to I-5. Marine Drive congestion doesn't allow them to leave the yard sometimes.

- Marine vessels have to make a sharp angle turn due to bridge height. Where will new bridge pilings be located? If changes needed to be made, marine freight users need to be consulted.
- Would rather use I-5 for truck freight, but often uses I-205 because of congestion. Seeing 5-10% increase in accidents on I-5.
- Congestion is deadly to freight hauling live poultry.
- Trucks try to use bridge during non-peak travel times, but if there's an accident then trucks are just sitting on the road, costing businesses money. Trucks need to keep moving.
- Business does 30,000 trips/year over Interstate Bridge. It costs almost \$1 million/year if drivers are stuck on bridge for 5 minutes a day.
- High water/runoff and the bridge lift time restrictions are challenges. Marine travel path is a challenge, have to make an S-curve, but would like a straight path under the I-5 bridge and rail bridge.
- Trying to move high, wide heavy freight by river to Port of Morrow instead of truck to avoid congestion. New bridge height might not be an issue, but width would be.
- Congestion is a big problem. It increases operational and environmental costs.
- Interstate Bridge is 23rd worst bottle neck in the nation.
- Congestion, unreliability, narrow on/off turns, safety, and bridge lifts are all problems for people driving freight through the program area.
- There is currently a freight driver shortage. If this program can reduce congestion, it would help recruit more drivers.
- Does the grade on the Longview Bridge cause issues for truckers here?
- Grade is a safety issue, but another issue is the increase in pollution/emissions from the trucks needing to deal with the increase in grade.
- The Astoria Bridge has an even higher grade. Maybe things can be learned from other bridges regarding this concern for trucks.
- Case studies should be done on grade issues. This will be helpful when discussing alternatives.

What would help improve your freight trip experience across (or under) the Interstate Bridge within the program area? What do you believe the program needs to address relative to freight?

- More lanes and more capacity. Maybe a dedicated lane for freight traffic.
- A dedicated freight lane for both local and not local trucks. Travel time reliability is essential.
- Freight is an issue that also speaks to equity. Those jobs pay living wages to people who don't have higher education or may be immigrants.
- The EIS process is not very great for freight. Another important aspect is the business perspective. Congested traffic cuts into the bottom line of a business when it comes to deliveries. Truck drivers are only allowed to drive a certain number of hours.
- Traffic analyses in the past have shown that the overwhelming majority of freight trips are within the I-5 corridor. If a dedicated freight route were some distance from I-5 it might not be very beneficial.
- Direct economic partnerships among vendors between Portland and Vancouver are needed. A better understanding of those relationships would help too.

- A dedicated freight lane or being able to use transit lanes during non-peak hours would help.
- An express lane for thru traffic.
- Consider a tunnel.
- Truck-only lane through the I-5 corridor.
- Use a ferry system for bike/pedestrian traffic and keep the bridge for vehicle traffic/transit only.
- Remove height restrictions (open air bridge) or build at least 24' high. Have lanes be 12' wide and ensure space for emergency vehicles.
- Eliminate some of the on/off ramps.
- Trucks that don't need to pick up/drop off in Portland won't use I-5, they would rather use I-205. If we create truck-only lanes on I-5, freight use of the corridor will probably increase.
- Avoid time restrictions for marine freight travel.

Do you have flexibility in the time you make your freight trip? If yes, what are the decisions around what time you choose to travel? What prevents you from traveling at other times of the day?

- Trucks are on the road because customers expect delivery at a particular time, not a lot flexibility with scheduling.
- Ports have rigid shifts. Industry is dictating schedule.
- Business moved to night shift operations to avoid congestion, but it's hard to find drivers that will work those hours.
- Congestion-free window is getting smaller and smaller, so there is no point in scheduling around congestion since it's always congested.
- Constantly using Google Maps and others apps to make the route decisions.

Do you try to avoid the morning or evening peak periods when traveling? If yes, what times do you try to travel across the Interstate Bridge? What time of day would you prefer to travel across the Interstate Bridge?

- There are no options. Routes to get to the main lines are also backed up.
- Avoid morning rush hour and afternoon. Any time after 3pm is several times worse.

Has your business changed anything about your logistics/deliveries/schedule (number of? Location? Trip chaining) to account for congestion issues in the program area?

- Business loses half a million dollars a year due to congestion on the bridge.
- We need an economy to match our population, which requires transportation. We need at least 3 lanes, with shoulder lanes, and properly spaced lanes.
- We work 24/7 but have to wait to operate outside bridge lift time constrictions (marine freight).
- We charge more to account for congestion.

Has your business developed any metrics or communicated information around the cost of congestion to the company bottom line?

- The industry is currently short 60-65k drivers. Fixing congestion would help to recruit/retain new employees.

- SmartWay (epa.gov/smartway) is a public/private partnership that measures truck emissions. 37% more emissions when traveling less than highway speed.
- ATRI did a study and says this is the 8th worst bridge and traffic. For us, expenses have increased almost 40%. Our revenue has decreased due to the congestion as well.

For marine travel, what time and travel limitations do you encounter? How do bridge lift restrictions affect your planning?

- Bridge lift limitations during commute times.
- High water can require a bridge lift, which is only available to marine vessels during certain hours.
- Marine freight would prefer no bridge lift.

If you are a marine user, do you use North Portland Harbor? Are their limitations to your business caused by current navigation conditions on the Columbia River or North Portland Harbor?

- Our facility is using more modes than what it was designed for.
- The facility needs to be safe for multi-use.
- Challenges with channel depth and environmental concerns in North Portland Harbor.

If you travel across the Interstate Bridge, why do you choose I-5 vs I-205? (reliability, stops/destination along I-5, etc.) If you choose to travel along I-205 instead of I-5, what are the reasons for that decision? Do you use the same freeway for both directions or, for example, do you travel northbound on I-205 and southbound on I-5 to travel through the region?

- Oregon road mile tax and congestion negatively affects our bottom line.
- I-205 is no longer viable either.
- Have we figured how tall the bridge is going to be above the river?

Do you use navigation apps to choose your route? Does this influence your route choice, time of day choice, etc.? Do you follow the proposed route from the app, or do you follow your instincts and stay on the roads you know?

- Yes, using all the apps consistently and constantly.
- Uses in-house app that calculates route with least number of miles. App is updated each morning based on what is in the driver's vehicle.
- Oversized freight – permit dictates route.
- Marine freight users have stay in a certain water depth.

What were your freight trip patterns pre-COVID? Have they changed since the COVID-19 pandemic started in March 2020? What are your anticipated freight trips post-COVID?

- Freight is back to 2019 levels now.
- COVID impacts are hit and miss. Depends on who your customers and partners are (air vs ground shipping).
- No one would have made it through the pandemic without truck freight.

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- Flatbed/heavy haul impacted negatively but refrigerated impacted positively during COVID. Lots of food moved over I-5 bridge.
- Freight will continue to be essential. This is not a job that can be done remotely.
- COVID pushed some of the labor force to retirement. Attracting new workforce is an issue.
- Draw bridge can't work. Can't afford to have a bridge that gets stuck. Maritime needs to be able to get through whenever it needs to.