

# EXECUTIVE STEERING GROUP (ESG) MEETING

## HIGH-LEVEL MEETING SUMMARY

October 21, 2021, 10 AM - 12 PM

**ESG Members in Attendance:** Secretary Roger Millar (WSDOT), Director Kris Strickler (ODOT), Commissioner Jo Ann Hardesty (City of Portland), Mayor Anne McEneny-Ogle (City of Vancouver), Executive Director Matt Ransom (RTC), President Lynn Peterson (Metro), Director of Engineering and Construction Steve Witter (TriMet, alternate), Shawn Donaghy (C-TRAN), Chief Public Affairs Officer Kristen Leonard (Port of Portland), CEO Julianna Marler (Port of Vancouver), CAG Co-Chair Lynn Valenter, CAG Co-Chair Ed Washington

**ESG Members not in Attendance:** Board Chair Scott Hughes (RTC)

## WELCOME, INTRODUCTIONS, PROPOSED AGENDA, AND UPDATES

Deb Nudelman, Senior Facilitator, welcomed the group, reviewed meeting logistics, and reminded attendees about the public comment opportunity later in the meeting.

Greg Johnson, IBR Program Administrator, welcomed the group and took a moment to thank Deb for her work as she is leaving the program. Greg then shared that next week we will be updating the Bi-state Committee so that they can discuss funding for the IBR Program.

Deb provided space for everyone to go around the table and provide any updates. Multiple attendees expressed appreciation for Deb and appreciation for everyone's dedication to the Program. Member updates included the following:

- Director Matt Ransom met with Identity Clark County to approve, as a coalition, a state and federal legislative statement. That is now released for public endorsement. This year's statement makes express request to legislature to think about funding the project.
- Shawn Donaghy expressed concerns over the timeline that exists, specifically regarding transit options. He wants to ensure the IBR team is considering voices of community and partners.
- Kristen Leonard shared that Frank Green recently gave a presentation to the Pacific Northwest Waterways Association at their annual convention. This group advocates for waterways, navigation and economic/environmental components. It was very valuable for them to hear about the Program and provide feedback.

Deb reviewed the proposed agenda topics and shared the meeting ground rules

## SEEKING CONCURRENCE: IBR DESIRED OUTCOMES, THE SCREENING CRITERIA PROCESS, AND PRELIMINARY LIST OF DESIGN OPTIONS

Greg reminded everyone that this is a collaborative effort and one of the goals of today is to seek some concurrence from partners. He introduced Chris Regan, Environmental Manager, and John Willis, Assistant Program Manager, to walk through the desired outcomes, the screening criteria process, and the preliminary list of design options.

Chris introduced himself and shared how we are moving towards the IBR solution. Over the summer there has been quite a bit of work on screening criteria and desired outcomes and how we link those before moving on to design options. He updated the group on how today we are looking for concurrence on Desired Outcomes and the screening criteria process, as well as the preliminary list of Design options.

John shared how the team has been working with ESG staff to create this preliminary list and will be screening these options in November and December so we can identify the IBR solution by Spring of 2022.

The screening criteria are all informed by the CAG, EAG, Equity Framework, Climate Framework, partner agencies, and community engagement. Design options have all been developed based on previous planning work but updating the major program components to focus on changes that have occurred. He shared how the goal is to identify design options in response to these changes. All options will be screened against the no-build options.

John explained that the design options are in response to the changes in the program area that have occurred since the 2013 LPA. They have been consolidated into five program areas that John reviewed at a high level with further detail in the packet. John reviewed the three options for the bridge crossing and alignment:

- The 2013 Locally Preferred Alternative
- The straight alignment
- The stacked alignment

He then reviewed two options for **downtown Vancouver**: the 2013 locally preferred alternative and the stacked crossing. The three options for **interchanges** on Hayden Island and marine Drive are a full interchange, partial interchange or no interchange. All options include the replacement of the North Portland Harbor bridge. The **transit options** include the no-build option, bus on shoulder, three bus rapid transit options, 4 light rail transit options, and 1 combined bus rapid transit and light rail transit options. Greg added that the IBR team has been meeting with C-TRAN and TriMet since June to develop these options.

## Discussion

- Mayor Anne McEnerny-Ogle suggested changing the language in the chart on [slide 19](#) to be more clear. She requested a language change from consider, to ensuring program fiscal responsibility. She requested more information on when the criteria will be defined. She felt the design options need

more information and definition on the general level of design, but she's comfortable with moving on today.

- Chris: the goal right now is to work to refine screening criteria in the next 1-1.5 months with partner review. The team is moving forward to early Spring 2022 to get to the IBR solution.
- John: we are trying to get the what and where identified. Beyond next spring we will be in a more robust design phase where we will be able to look at impacts. These are big parts of design we can take into evaluation.
- Commissioner Hardesty shared her support for desired outcomes, noting need for continued coordination with EAG and expressing a commitment to the additional time it will take on her side to get to success.
- President Peterson echoed commissioner Hardesty's comments on the desired outcomes. She asked how land use and future growth will continue to be thought about and how access for people is going to be measured.
  - Greg: we have been looking at land use plans to make sure we are fitting into context of what the area sees for itself. That is part of our analysis.
  - President Peterson asked if there is any qualitative aspect that could be carried through in the listed desired outcomes.
  - Chris: the way land use is thought about is often in terms of climate and how we can assist with climate strides to align with land use and there are specific metrics on land use.
- Secretary Roger Miller commented that land use should not be held as static as if there is a physical outcome we want to see; we may need to change land use to make that physical outcome work.
- Director Strickler stated that, as potential impacts (either consequential or beneficial) are studied, the team needs to be looking forward beyond the NEPA phase. This is not only how land use dictates the transportation solution, but what the transportation solution can do to help support land use for 100 years and beyond.
  - Greg: the team will consider that a friendly amendment and will get language to reflect that.
- Matt Ransom reminded the group that as an association of governments, RTC covers Clark, Skamania and Klickitat counties. Within the regional transportation plan of their service area, and what was presented today, he feels comfortable concurring. On the finance side, we need to pursue the money and so far, the IBR team seems to be pursuing very diverse funding resources. He reminded everyone that as an association he has to give extreme deference to the owner/operators and to the bi-state legislative committee and other governing boards including those with transit boards and those with tolling authority.

- President Peterson clarified if the group was only discussing desired outcomes and screening criteria and not the solutions yet.
  - Deb: due to time constraints, we will try and catch up rather than circling back around.
- Commissioner Hardesty thanked the team for the outline and the timing presented. Commissioner Hardesty conveyed that it will be important for her to see how components advance goals and meet desired outcomes. It's important that these convey the ability to advance climate and equity. She expressed concerns that the alignment, highway lanes, and transit design options have all been developed in a way that makes it appear as if the solution has already been identified.
  - Greg: with the design options, we tried to capture the universal alternatives that will meet purpose and need, and our climate and equity framework.
  - Commissioner Hardesty responded that the project needs to be part of the solution and help prevent 124 degree days, demonstrate how it won't contribute to asthma and hospitalization of black and brown Portlanders who are usually the recipients of negative outcomes of freeway activity. How is it compatible with the now inevitable future of hotter days and increased flooding? It needs to be part of the solution for the affordable housing crisis impacting folks on both sides of the river. We need to see how the Design Options are addressing these core issues.
  - Greg: understood, and we will have the equity and climate principals speak to this integration.
- President Peterson asked that the program be able to quantify what it would look like if there was a more robust transit, Congestion Pricing program, and what that does to demand to see if that works and what elements are playing with what. She is concerned that assumptions on tolling seem too muted. She asked that conversations take place to discuss if that impacts demand, and if so by how much positively or negatively and that the outer limit just needs to be better defined.
  - Greg: the IBR team will be bringing information on how the program is coordinating with ODOT on efforts related to congestion pricing scenarios next month.
  - President Peterson clarified that this discussion needs to be in the solutions space. We can't go back to council with a holistic solution without these answers.
- Commissioner Hardesty clarified her comments, stating the goal is to fix congestion and stop fender benders and we want to do that without making climate worse and sending more automobiles into neighborhoods. At JPACT, it's a consistent, sad trend that death by auto are up and people walking in their community are killed by auto violence. We want to avoid highway driven urban renewal but reducing congestion is not the only concern.
- Secretary Millar stated that land use should not be fixed. For example, if there are many single-family homes on one side of the bridge and big box retail on the other side, there will be traffic; there is only so much a bridge can do. We need to be working in cooperation with the people who decide what is on either side of the bridge and there will have to be changes to how we organize our communities.

- Deb: hearing that we need to not separate the process from the results we want to see. We need to be evaluating all options to understand where best the region can go.
- Steve Witter expressed his support for the issues brought up by Commissioner Hardesty and President Peterson. The reality that people make choices that we can't subsidize and that the goal is to not get people out of cars but want to provide an attractive alternative. He expressed continued concerns over the timeline and does not want it to lead to hasty decisions but is committed to doing what he can to assist in the FTA realm.
- Shawn Donaghy agrees that the ultimate goal at C-TRAN is to share space and not force people out of vehicles but to responsibly share space. From the C-TRAN perspective, he's okay with the desired outcomes but not quite there with the design options. He requested a robust presentation be given on how land use and funding impact the project and timeline. He doesn't want to take the voice away from the community but needs an outline on how a deviation of ROD will change the timeline for FTA and FHWA funding. Lastly, the work being done by both ports impacts the ROD and Shawn requested a presentation on freight movement. He's comfortable with the design process but has issues with the timeline on how the design options are being explored.
- Commissioner Hardesty stated that, yes, the goal is to not move people out of cars, people often use public transit because they must and we should be building for people who need it most, not who have multiple options.
- Director Strickler asked for confirmation that the options aren't fixed and finite, and that the program will bring work back analysis that demonstrates the climate, equity, and land use lens. And he reiterated that these factors are all important as we look beyond the ribbon cutting. He confirmed that if the impacts of any of these options were too great, or the benefits were not enough then those options would not advance further.
  - Greg: the IBR team is taking all these issues into account. Equity and Climate lens' will be a tremendous overlay to how this program moves forward.
- Lynn Valenter stated that Desired Outcomes are clearly tailored to the Purpose and Need and Community Values the CAG collectively adopted. The CAG has not had an opportunity to see materials because we don't have an overall organization to embed within the team to help take a pulse check as the materials were developed. Given this, Lynn identified that she would abstain from responding to the desired outcomes, screening process, and design options because she has not been able to check in with CAG representatives. She also noted that she did not see anything inconsistent with feedback provided around other efforts by CAG.
  - Greg: there was a lot of discussion as to what groups should get this information first before deciding to begin with the ESG before the advisory groups. Greg apologized for the position Lynn has been put in but assured Lynn that the advisory groups will get this information in November.

- President Peterson asked for a model that is heavy on demand management and light on other pieces. She felt that right now, we're unable to make decisions as we don't know how they play together until we have this information to inform final design.
- Director Witter felt that the fact Lynn Valenter hasn't seen the materials is concerning as you're asking the committee to approve something that has not yet been seen by the appointed Community Advisory Group.
  - Deb: that's why we are asking for concurrence, which just means good enough for now to be ok with a process, not setting something in stone to be final.
  - Greg: we understand the conundrum, especially that we put the CAG in because they have not seen this. We went around and around, it was a tough decision to take to ESG first.
- Mayor McEnery commented that this is not a final product but the beginning of a rollout. Vancouver strongly pushed for this to hit the ESG first before the community so we could see what the first rollout step was. The City of Vancouver considers this the first step in many iterations.
- Commissioner Hardesty stated that if we couldn't get elected officials in principal, moving forward would be premature. Then you are asking community for advice on something electeds don't support. She wants to see it come to ESG before the community because we vote, and buck will stop with us.
- Julianna Marler expressed we need to appreciate the differences between our communities, which is what makes our region strong. It seems that is what is folding into the process taking all information between communities to give us a framework to work towards, and noted support for the process.
- Kristen Leonard indicated agreement so far and recognized we are working on a solution for a bridge that is currently not working for our region. She asked that more members from EAG or the climate group sit at the table so that discussions are more integrated.
  - Greg: the climate and equity officers have full right to be in all conversations. They've seen technical outputs and give input and we will ensure that continues moving forward.
- Ed Washington stood with Lynn in choosing to abstain.
  - Lynn clarified that she does not have any concerns.
- Director Strickler feels comfortable moving forward and trusts that the information needed is coming. ODOT has actively been working in Portland to create a comprehensive conversation and solution that is not one project at a time. The congestion pricing conversation is vital to the work moving forward and to balance the needs of the comprehensive future and address the problems.
- Secretary Millar feels comfortable, especially because of the work done by both the teams and the partners on ESG.

## OPPORTUNITY FOR PUBLIC INPUT

Deb opened the floor to public comment. Five people shared comments.

- Chris Smith identified himself as a private citizen and commented that it seems IBR is headed for a choice between LRT and BRT, hoping we can adopt both. Why can't we have dedicated ROW like on tillicum crossing?
- Bob Ortblad identified himself as a civil engineer with 50 years of experience. He expressed his shock over the ESG moving forward with the three bridge options presented. The best option in his opinion has been eliminated: the immersed tube tunnel. He felt that a bridge would be a massive mistake.
- Douglas Allen identified himself as a SE Portland citizen. He felt that the design options shown do not express the full breadth of options that meet purpose and need as the Common Sense Alternative II has been removed. It was removed since it didn't meet screening criteria that would be fine. However, when it was removed, it was dropped based on misrepresentation which is a violation on public involvement process and NEPA. He agrees with the desired outcomes and the CSA II should be advanced to screening.
- Ron Arp is with the business group Identity Clark County. He expressed strong support for replacing the I-5 bridge and heard that program leaders want to talk more with businesses and wants to help fill that gap. The program office now has 57 letters from leading businesses all endorsing the replacement of the bridge as it serves as the backbone for the regional economy and the bridge is outdated, seismically unsound, and accident prone. Breaking ground by 2025 will require cooperation, courage, compromise and flexibility. First, we will never get a less expensive or less complicated opportunity to fix the I-5 bridge than right now. Second, it will never make sense to patch the existing strands. Third, it will never be acceptable for choke points limiting freight commerce and emergency vehicles. It will never be acceptable for the NW second largest metro to allow traffic to stop 300-400 times a year for bridge lifts. The bridge is a gift from our past and is now a gift for us to give forward for the next 20 years welcoming a path forward.
- John Ley identified himself as being Camas citizen. His concern was that time is their most valuable commodity and largest frustration in regard to transportation and being stuck in traffic. In the grand scheme of things, I-5 is congested 12 hours a day. There's been great discussion on everything but traffic congestion reductions. Its nice to improve climate and equity, but everybody wants to save time. The people who are going to be paying for this want a cost-effective solution, so I applaud the City of Vancouver mayor for advocating for a cost-effective solution.

## CONFIRM UPCOMING MEETING TOPICS, NEXT STEPS, AND SUMMARY

Deb shared the CAG update and recent community engagement efforts, including the 9 elevating equity listening session, 11 mini grants, and 4 community working groups.

The next meeting topics include the equity and climate work product, progress on the screening process for design options, and moving toward the IBR solution in Spring 2022. There is a proposal to extend the length of meetings in Jan-March to help get to the IBR solution.

Greg thanked the group for all their continued participation and hard work in these meetings. Deb thanked the ESG members and attendees, and the meeting was adjourned.

### Executive Steering Group Members in Attendance

Name and Title	Organization
Director Kris Strickler	Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT)
Secretary Roger Millar	Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT)
Commissioner Jo Ann Hardesty	City of Portland
Mayor Anne McEnerny-Ogle	City of Vancouver
Executive Director Matt Ransom	Southwest Washington Regional Transportation Council (RTC)
Council President Lynn Peterson	Metro
Executive Director of Engineering and Construction	TriMet
Chief Public Affairs Officer Kristen Leonard	Port of Portland
CEO Julianna Marler	Port of Vancouver
Lynn Valenter	Community Advisory Group Co-Chair
Ed Washington	Community Advisory Group Co-Chair

### IBR Program Staff in Attendance

Name	Organization
Greg Johnson, Program Administrator	IBR program team

Frank Green, Assistant Program Administrator	IBR program team
Ray Mabey, Assistant Program Administrator	IBR program team
John Willis, Assistant Program Manager	IBR program team
Johnell Bell, Principal Equity Officer, Community Advisory Group co-facilitator	IBR program team
Sarah Ogier, Principal Climate Officer	IBR program team
Chris Regan, Environmental Manager	IBR program team
Deb Nudelman, Lead Facilitator	IBR program team

## Additional Participants

105 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 Recording and Materials

A recording of the meeting and the meeting materials are available on the website:  
<https://www.interstatebridge.org/get-involved-folder/calendar/esg-october-21-meeting/>