

EXECUTIVE STEERING GROUP (ESG) MEETING

HIGH-LEVEL MEETING SUMMARY

September 15, 2022 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.

ESG Members in Attendance: UMO Director Brendan Finn (ODOT) (alternate), SW Region Administrator Carly Francis (WSDOT) (alternate), President Lynn Peterson (Metro), Commissioner Jo Ann Hardesty (City of Portland), City Manager Eric Holmes (City of Vancouver) (alternate), Executive Director Curtis Robinhold (Port of Portland), CEO Julianna Marler (Port of Vancouver), Public Affairs Director JC Vannatta (TriMet) (alternate), Executive Director Matt Ransom (RTC), CEO Shawn Donaghy (C-TRAN), CAG Co-Chair Lynn Valenter, CAG Co-Chair Ed Washington.

ESG Members not in Attendance: Director Kris Strickler (ODOT), Secretary Roger Millar (WSDOT), Mayor Anne McEnerny-Ogle (City of Vancouver), General Manager Sam Desue (TriMet)

IBR Program Staff in Attendance: Greg Johnson (Program Administrator), Rich Huang (Program Manager), Ray Mabey (Assistant Program Administrator), Frank Green (Assistant Program Administrator), Millicent Williams (Lead Facilitator), Chris Regan, IBR Environmental Manager.

WELCOME, INTRODUCTION, PROPOSED AGENDA AND UPDATES

Millicent Williams, Lead Facilitator, opened the meeting by reviewing the meeting ground rules and asked that the partners and/or their alternates introduce themselves and provide updates on what is going on within their jurisdictions. Many partners noted their gratitude to the IBR program and all the efforts made to arrive at this point.

PROGRAM ADMINISTRATOR UPDATES

Program Administrator Greg Johnson provided an update on the program by starting off with an overview of the schedule (slide 9) but added that the staff are currently working on a more detailed, integrated schedule that will show detailed dates. It will also show the repercussions if specific milestones are not met and the impact to the overall project schedule. The program anticipates two years to complete the environmental process and obtain a Record of Decision. He noted that there will be a series of meetings held during the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process to help inform the public along the way along with ad-hoc meetings throughout to be sure everyone has a chance to stay informed.

Since the previous Executive Steering Group (ESG) meeting in July, the program has submitted for the Big Bridge Grant under the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) in August 2022. This was submitted for both planning (\$1 Million) and construction (\$700 Million) grants.

Program Administrator Greg Johnson stated that when the ESG meets again, the program will be sharing the economic impact analysis that supports the Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA) and revised cost estimate which will include inflationary and materials escalation costs.

Administrator Johnson provided a quick recap of the LPA elements (slide 10-11) that were approved by ESG vote. He noted that the program has been diving deeper into the details associated with the different elements that make up the LPA like transit and park-and-rides. In addition, the LPA states that there will be one auxiliary lane in each direction and, as the program looks ahead, they will be assessing if this will suffice in the future.

The program is currently on target to receive permission from the Washington State legislature on the variable rate tolling, similar to what has been agreed upon with Oregon Transportation Commission and legislature.

Administrator Johnson presented an example of one possible river crossing concept (slide 12). This example shows two, side-by-side bridges with three through lanes in each direction with one auxiliary lane on each side. Under one bridge is transit and the other is the pedestrian/bicycle travel lanes. He stated that the program is looking into all concepts that will have the least amount of impact as they explore the different crossings alternatives. Before moving on he wanted to stress that this is only a concept example and there will be additional possibilities as the team develops them.

Program Administrator Johnson touched on a few additional program updates:

- The program has been working to address the 165+ partner conditions received from the partners boards and councils.
- The program is working on the framework for a community benefits discussion. They will be putting together committees on both sides of the river to make sure the public's interests are heard.
- Conversations with the U.S. Coast Guard continue to advance. Assistant Program Administrator Ray Mabey met with them in early September, resulting in good conversation regarding the mitigation of the one percent of river traffic that requires a bridge higher than 116 feet. He noted that they have path towards acquiring the U.S. Coast Guard permit.

- Program Administrator Greg Johnson and other members of the program recently attended the Federal Transit Agency (FTA) National Construction Conference which covered topics around funding, risk, and large transit construction projects. The program will be putting together a summary on what they heard and present it to the ESG in future meetings.
- The program is looking forward to receiving funding from the Oregon legislature which will give them the opportunity to apply for the USDOT's Mega Grant Program with a request for \$700 Million. The program will continue to look for all grant opportunities as they proceed with design and environmental (slide 14).

Program Administrator Johnson opened the floor for questions. Portland Commissioner Jo Ann Hardesty asked about electrification and how it could significantly increase the cost of the project and requested a conversation to review the pros and cons at the ESG level. Administrator Johnson clarified they are pursuing smart technologies to accommodate electric vehicles and that both the ESG and the Equity Advisory Group will vet this topic.

UMO Director Brendan Finn (ODOT) voiced his appreciation for the graphic showing the bus on shoulder, as C-TRAN has been a national leader in this arena.

Prior to the partners coming back from the meeting break, Lead facilitator Millicent Williams noted that on Wednesday, September 28th from 6:00-7:30 pm there will be an Equity Roundtable Event: "Why Equity Matters in Infrastructure" presentation and conversation.

ADVANCING THE MODIFIED LPA INTO NEPA

IBR Environmental Manager Chris Regan presented how the program will advance the modified LPA into NEPA process. Slide 16 covered, "What is NEPA?" Chris noted the most important thing about NEPA is that it is an action-forcing law which means that any time a federal agency takes an action, they have to ensure they comply with NEPA.

There are two specific elements of NEPA that are important. First, it ensures that when agencies take action, they have to review environmental impacts and significant environmental impacts must be reviewed by an environmental impact statement (EIS). Second, it requires that the proposed action and the resulting environmental impacts are compiled and the public has an opportunity to provide comments before the action moves forward. Slide 17 outlined the different actions under the NEPA umbrella.

IBR is currently in the supplemental EIS process, as shown on Slide 18. This process builds on the work that had been done over the past 10 years and addresses what has changed since the past decision made by our

federal partners. The program is now looking at all the technical aspects and reviewing what has changed with this modified LPA.

As the program moves into NEPA the teams are focused on the elements of the environment. Slide 19 covered every discipline that the program will analyze with detailed technical reports. These reports were previously drafted but will need to be assessed to address any changes from the time they were written to the present.

Chris Regan provided a rough table of contents for the supplemental draft EIS. As he noted there is a chapter that focuses on the Financial Analysis, as well as a chapter focused on Section 4(f) evaluation which covers the impact to recreation and resources lands and to ensure that we do our best to minimize any impacts. On slide 20, he explained that there are two alternatives that are evaluated in NEPA: no-build, which is the baseline, and the modified LPA. These two alternatives will be compared against each other to assess what the respective environmental consequences are.

Mr. Regan then explained the public comment period and how important it is to hear everyone's comments, slide 21. He highlighted the different ways people's voices can be heard. He then provided an overview of how the supplemental final EIS differs from the draft, slide 22, which takes all comments received from the public comment period. Slide 23 concluded this presentation, highlighting the NEPA and other regulatory milestones that the program will need to target for an anticipated Record of Decision in Summer 2024.

Program Administrator Greg Johnson reinforced the program's effort to address Chapter 6 of the Supplemental EIS: Public Involvement and Tribal Consultation. He noted that the program has been having meetings with the tribal governments throughout this process and understands the importance of these meetings and agreements.

Commissioner Jo Ann Hardesty (City of Portland) voiced her appreciation to Chris Regan and program for delivering an understandable overview of the NEPA next steps. She noted that the summer of 2023 is when the program will be engaging the public more proactively. She wanted to know when the ESG would have access to the supplemental draft EIS. Mr. Regan noted that it will be available at the same time as the public comment period. He did note that some of the elements will be discussed with the partners as it develops.

Commissioner Hardesty followed up by asking what the program needs from her and her colleagues as they prepare for the release of the document in Summer 2023. Program Administrator Greg Johnson stated that it is the goal of the program to meet with the ESG and keep them informed along with the partners' boards and councils as information develops.

CAG Co-Chair Lynn Valenter recalled that previously, the plan was to be in construction by 2025, but now it appears it is looking more like 2026. Program Administrator Greg Johnson stated that they are still on

schedule for the 2025 construction start time. He clarified the late 2025 to early 2026 is the contract for the big bridge construction and all the preliminary work that needs to occur ahead of the actual construction (notifications, signage, mobilization, etc.) will take place in 2025.

City Manager Eric Holmes (City of Vancouver) noted that there are some unique potential mitigation issues, specific to the Washington side of the river, that are directly related to the U.S. Coast Guard permitting. He would like a conversation to discuss the staging work that will need to happen in early construction and how that ties in with the U.S. Coast Guard permit and how that affects the businesses upstream. Program Administrator Johnson stated that the program is having preliminary discussions with those business owners who are possibly affected by bridge height and assured that they will be ongoing discussions and stressed the importance of having zero disruptions to their day-to-day operations. Program Administrator Johnson added that the program anticipates having these issues resolved prior to the record of decision.

Lead Facilitator Millicent Williams thanked the program for the presentation and updates and moved the meeting to the public comment period.

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

[1:16:37] Karen Gibson: thank you so much. I just wanted to mention that on October 13th at 7:00 pm at the Vancouver Housing Authority at 2500 Main Street the Arnada Neighborhood Association will be holding their next meeting. As you know the Arnada Neighborhood is within the program area and sits directly next to Interstate 5 between the Fourth and Mill Plain interchanges. We certainly would encourage you to please come to our meeting and hear about our questions and concerns as IBR will already be in attendance doing a presentation.

I'd like to read something from the WSDOT right-of-way manual, dated September 2020, under Chapter 6 Acquisition, Section 6-1.2, rules Section b – Just Compensation, “in determining just compensation, any decrease or increase in the market value prior to the date of valuation caused by the project itself or by the likelihood that the property would be acquired for said project will be disregarded.” We would certainly like to have a further discussion at our meeting on October 13th about what that means for the folks who live in Arnada Neighborhood who received survey letters both in October of 2021, June of 2022, and had their homes surveyed with pictures and everything on June 9th of 2022.

So, I encourage you to please come to the meeting, have an open conversation with us, and let's talk about what this project means for our little neighborhood. Thank you so much.

[1:18:30] John Ley: Good morning, John Ley, Clark County. Your slide says your voice is important, we want to hear from you. I don't know whether to laugh or cry about that. Sadly, and frustratingly, you continue to

ignore the people and their desires for this entire project. Overwhelmingly, the top priority from everybody on both sides of the river is to save time and reduce traffic congestion. Supposedly, [for] 70% of the people, that is their number one priority; and, in SW Washington, it is 78% of the people, yet your proposed solution does none of that.

Unbelievably, travel times from Salmon Street to the Fremont Bridge will double by [year] 2045 according to your own numbers. Furthermore, the amount of vehicles stuck in congested traffic will double where, again, by 2045, half of rush hour traffic will travel 0-20 miles per hour. That is absolutely ignoring the whole purpose of this project which is to increase traffic flow and reduce traffic congestion. You are ignoring the people on tolling; overwhelmingly, people do not want tolls. SW Washington citizens have said no. Furthermore, Roy Rogers of Washington County and Paul Savas in Clackamas County are saying no to tolling, in addition to the entire Clark County Council.

The U.S. Coast Guard is saying we need a bridge with unlimited capacity so that our marine traffic can ship their goods and you appear to be ignoring that, preferring a solution that taps the taxpayers pocket for mitigation. Again, we need a solution that reduces traffic congestion and delivers to the people what they want and that is reducing traffic congestion and saving time. Thank you.

[1:20:48] Chris Smith: Appearing on behalf of the Just Crossing Alliance and a reminder that the alliance is seeking the most sustainable and equitable outcomes from this project. We are seeking a successful project because we want to see the active transportation and transit connections get made across the river as part of the regional climate strategy. I'd like to talk about how the public comment period will work once the draft supplemental EIS is published. We have been through a few of these, we know how this process works and what we are likely to see is hundreds if not thousands of pages of documents dropped for the public to read and then immediately starting a countdown clock for how long we have to comment. So, my request, which this body might endorse is that the documents are published, we have 30 days to read and understand them, and then the public comment period would start after that reading period. That would be greatly facilitate the public's ability to participate in this process in a meaningful way. Thank you.

CONFIRM UPCOMING MEETING TOPICS, NEXT STEPS AND SUMMARY

Lead Facilitator Millicent Williams thanked the ESG for their time and noted that the program is looking at making adjustments to the frequency of ESG meetings because of the difference in the type of work the team is doing and when the team needs ESG member input. Currently, the program is looking at planning an ESG meeting every other month. The next meeting will be either late November or Early December, followed by a meeting in February 2023 (slide 30). Lead Facilitator Millicent Williams also noted that the meeting day may change to allow for all partners to attend and not miss any meetings within their own organizations.

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Program Administrator Greg Johnson closed the meeting by noting that the program will continue to utilize the intergovernmental agreements that have allowed the partners staff to work on the project.

The meeting adjourned at 11:33 pm.

MEETING RECORD AND MATERIALS

Meeting Recording

A recording of the meeting is available here:

<https://youtu.be/VO9yVRI9skY>

The meeting materials are available here:

<https://www.interstatebridge.org/get-involved-folder/calendar/esg-september-15-2022-meeting/>