DOWNTOWN VANCOUVER COMMUNITY WORKING GROUP (CWG) MEETING #2

Subject: Downtown Vancouver Community Working Group Meeting #2 Summary

Date and Time: November 18, 2021, 4:30 to 7:00 P.M.

Location: Zoom Webinar and YouTube Livestream

WELCOME REMARKS & INTRODUCTIONS

Monica Santos-Pinacho, facilitator for the Downtown Vancouver (DV) Community Working Group (CWG), welcomed everyone to the meeting and provided an overview of accessible participation options including closed captions and ASL interpretation. Monica led the team in an introductory exercise where each Community Working Group participant shared how many times they cross the Interstate Bridge in an average week. The average answer reported by most participants was 0-4 trips per week, and the most frequent number of trips reported by one participant was 10-15 trips per week.

OVERVIEW OF COMMUNITY WORKING GROUP AGREEMENTS, ROLES AND COMMITMENTS TO EQUITY

Monica then provided an overview of the CWG framework, and shared that three DV CWG participants, Jasmine Tolbert, Michelle Brewer, and Whitney Mosback are also Community Advisory Group (CAG) members who will provide a direct linkage to the IBR CAG. This was the second and final CWG meeting currently scheduled, with additional engagement opportunities throughout the process on an as-needed basis. Feedback on specific preliminary transportation design options from these meetings will be presented to advisory groups, program stakeholders, and legislators to help them better understand the public perspective. Monica then turned the conversation over to Brad Phillips.

PROGRAM TIMELINE OVERVIEW

Brad Phillips, IBR Technical Lead, began by providing an overview of the program timeline between now and early 2022. The program will continue to refine design options to address changes since the previous planning effort in 2013, embed equity and climate considerations within the design options, finalize screening criteria to evaluate design options, and engage in a two-way dialogue with the community around design options. By early 2022, the program seeks to develop and reach consensus on the IBR multimodal design solution in collaboration with partners and stakeholders. Brad shared that design options were developed in collaboration with agency partners, and in response to changes since previous planning efforts, while incorporating current regional values and priorities. A summary of Interstate Bridge transportation concerns

expressed by CWG participants during the previous meeting include an inadequate safety environment for cyclists and pedestrians crossing the bridge, existing heavy traffic and frequent congestion, and a lack of convenient and reliable access to public transit. Brad shared that an additional concern expressed at the last meeting was a lack of parking availability in downtown Vancouver and the waterfront. He then said that while this is a concern, it is outside of the program scope and it is not something that will be addressed by this program. He emphasized that the IBR program will working closely with agency partners and the City of Vancouver to ensure that this concern is addressed.

PRELIMINARY DESIGN OPTIONS

The program is looking at a variety of options that differ in constructability and bridge footprint. All design options include a dedicated transit guideway, a multi-use path, and vehicle travel. Brad shared the three options for the bridge crossing and alignment:

- 2013 Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA) option: Two separate bridges with a curved alignment. The curved alignment provides constructability challenges.
- Straight alignment option: Similar to the 2013 LPA option but a straight alignment, rather than curved, which allows for easier constructability.
- Stacked alignment option: One bridge with southbound traffic stacked on top of northbound traffic. This option has a smaller footprint over the Columbia River compared to other options.

The two options for how the Interstate Bridge will connect to downtown Vancouver and the I-5 corridor:

- 2013 Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA) option: Allows connectivity to downtown Vancouver and SR-14 via on/off ramps. This option includes all existing ramp connections that exist today.
- Option with stacked crossing: Limits direct access to downtown Vancouver via I-5 due to stacked alignment structural considerations.

Vancouver interchanges (Mill Plain to SR-500) will be reconstructed with braided ramps and/or auxiliary lanes to help improve traffic flow and safety. All bicycle and pedestrian connections near Vancouver interchanges will see improvements that support east to west travel.

The three options for Hayden Island and Marine Drive interchanges:

- Full interchange option: Ability to access Hayden Island directly from I-5 in either direction.
- Partial interchange option: Hayden Island accessible via I-5 interchanges to and from Washington. Hayden Island access to and from Oregon available via Marine Drive interchange and arterial bridge.

- No interchange option: No access to Hayden Island via I-5 interchanges in either direction. All Hayden Island access available via Marine Drive interchanges and arterial bridges from Portland to Hayden Island.

All Hayden Island and Marine Drive interchange options include replacing the North Portland Harbor Bridge due to seismic vulnerability.

QUESTIONS

CWG Participant: Has the decision to expand the bridge to 10 lanes already been decided? Adding more lanes will not relieve traffic.

Brad: We are studying that. The bridge crossing diagram depicting 5 lanes in each direction is a starting assumption from the previous planning effort. We will be conducting studies to collect data for an updated discussion on the number of lanes, but that data is not available yet.

CWG Participant: Is the pedestrian bridge on the west side or the east side of the bridge?

Brad: The shared use path will be on the east side of the bridge and high-capacity transit is on the west side in these graphics. In the stacked option, we are looking at various configurations which could include the shared use path on the upper level above the high-capacity transit.

CWG Participant: On the Downtown Vancouver slide, Options 2 and 3 have very different ramp connections to downtown. Can the team talk more about the elevations of the bridge and the ramps and whether one option provides more or less connectivity to the bridge from downtown?

Brad: The ramps in Option 1 all provide the same connections to downtown that exist today. The elevations of the bridge itself is very high over the Columbia River channel, approximately 116 feet of vertical clearance. It then comes down toward the waterfront. The mainline I-5 in Option 1 is the highest element in the options.

CWG Participant: Is there materially more usable physical space underneath the interchanges in Option 2? Does it leave room for public parks or structures underneath or would this space be unusable?

Brad: The removal of the ramp next to Main Street might allow for flexible uses but we do not know that yet for sure. This is currently being studied and we will understand this more as we bring this option into screening.

BREAKOUT SESSION #1: PRELIMINARY HIGHWAY DESIGN OPTIONS

Monica provided an introduction to the breakout session format and emphasized that collecting participant feedback is critically important as a component of providing community input to the program. The questions in this breakout discussion seek CWG participant feedback around initial impressions of the bridge

configurations and interchange design options. Monica introduced the following questions before beginning the session:

- What are your thoughts after hearing about the various bridge configuration and downtown Vancouver interchange design options? Specifically, do you have thoughts regarding the bridge footprint and potential loss of access to downtown via C Street?
- As described, the proposed Vancouver interchange design option has been created to maximize safety for vehicles and minimize impacts to surrounding property. Do you have thoughts about how the design would eliminate direct access to Fourth Plain from SR 500 and require access from St. Johns Blvd?
- Do you have thoughts about other interchanges and street crossings?

Participants then discussed design options in breakout rooms for approximately 15 minutes.

BREAKOUT SESSION #1 REPORT OUT – HIGHWAY DESIGN OPTIONS

- Several comments in support of removing the Downtown Vancouver interchange
- Comment that the C Street interchange is very high speed, heavily trafficked, and can be dangerous
- Support for implementing changes to the C Street interchange and Washington on-ramp to eliminate congestion
- Support for adding increased modes of transportation to cross the bridge; this will increase freight efficiency and reduce idling
- Concern that the maps provided here do not provide enough detail to provide quality feedback; request that this information be presented in 3D maps or modelling
- Support for the stacked alignment option, but concern about how this option would impact connectivity and access to downtown
- Comment that the stacked alignment would provide a positive pedestrian and active transportation experience since noise would be greatly reduced by physically separating transportation modes
- Concern that it feels unsafe to walk, bike, or roll alongside vehicle traffic
- Preference for whichever option has the lowest environmental impact and least amount of digging during the building phase, particularly near the Fort Vancouver site

TRANSIT INTEGRATION

Monica the introduced IBR Technical Lead Ben Deines to discuss transit integration. Ben shared the ways that people access transit, including walking, biking or rolling, by personal vehicle, or via transfer from another form of transit. He then shared a series of maps illustrating those methods of accessing transit within the city of Vancouver. The first map displayed existing bus rapid transit (The Vine), local bus stops, bike facilities, and

key destinations in Vancouver, potential high-capacity transit alignments. There are two potential new transit connections in downtown Vancouver that are being studied as part of the program: the Main Street extension and the Community Connector which would be a pedestrian bicycle connection across I-5.

- Potential downtown alignment: goes up Washington Street and would serve downtown Vancouver well

- Potential I-5 alignment: hugs the freeway and runs along the west side or center-running alignment. This would serve the east side of the freeway, downtown, and destinations such as Fort Vancouver. This alignment would terminate at a point further to the north near Kiggins Bowl.

Ben noted that the program area includes a significant percentage of people with disabilities, low-income households, and households without a vehicle, and emphasized the importance of high-capacity transit service in this area.

QUESTIONS

CWG Participant: Do you have any graphics that shows what exists right now and what the proposed plan changes are so that we can visually see what the differences would be? I am unable to tell the differences in this graphic.

Ben: Everything shown in these graphics are existing conditions, with the exception of the proposed new connections (shown in blue) and the proposed high-capacity transit alignment (shown in the dotted line).

CWG Participant: Will this bridge serve as a neighborhood connector within neighborhoods of Vancouver, or will it function as a faster moving route that moves traffic and freight across the city? I would like this to serve as a fast, easy, convenient interstate. It no longer works as a neighborhood connector.

Katy Belokonny, IBR: We would like to hear from you what your needs are for the function of the bridge.

PRELIMINARY TRANSIT DESIGN OPTIONS

Monica introduced IBR Technical Lead Kelly Betteridge to present preliminary transit design options that are being explored by the program. Kelly began by providing a background of how the program developed the 10 options being presented, stating that IBR worked with transit agencies and regional planning agencies to develop 10 different transit options with multiple modes and multiple alignments. These options were developed with the intention of providing the best possible service for all types of transit users in this region. Going forward in 2022, the IBR program will collaborate with partners and stakeholders to develop and reach consensus on the IBR multimodal design solution.

Kelly then presented a summary of the ten transit options being analyzed by the program:

- (1) No-Build Option: This option assumes no transit improvements from the IBR program but does include other planned transit improvements in the next 25 years. The study of this option will be used as a tool for measuring the effects of other 9 options.
- (1) Bus on Shoulder (BOS) option:
- (3) Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) options
- (4) Light Rail Transit (LRT) options
- (1) Combined BRT/LRT option:

QUESTIONS

CWG Participant: What is a couplet?

Kelly: A couplet means that transit is travelling on two different streets. It travels on one street in a certain direction and travels on a different street going the opposite direction.
CWG Participant: What would the impact on traffic, businesses, and homes be from an LRT option?

Kelly: Light rail would use the same amount of space used by the BRT system that is currently in place.

CWG Participant: What is the effective difference between the first and the third options?

The difference is that the proposed BRT option would operate in dedicated space. The existing BRT does travel on the same footprint, but it currently travels on shared lanes.

BREAKOUT SESSION #2: PRELIMINARY TRANSIT DESIGN OPTIONS

Monica introduced the next breakout session focused on collecting feedback regarding preliminary transit design options. The questions in this breakout discussion seek CWG participant feedback around initial impressions of preliminary transit design options. Monica introduced the following questions before beginning the session:

- What are you most looking forward to with an enhanced transit option in downtown Vancouver? What do you anticipate to be the most challenging?
- Which transit station would you anticipate using most frequently?
- What method would you use to access a transit station?
- If you've found a transit system that you've liked in another city, what did you like about it?
- Which serves you better: a faster trip -or- more frequent stops?

- Which transit mode do you prefer?

BREAKOUT SESSION #2 REPORT OUT:

- Enthusiasm for light rail and comment that its speed and dedicated rail lanes will be more efficient than additional cars on the bridge
- Concern that a bus system would not get as much ridership as a light rail system as buses tend to have a less favorable reputation in our country
- Comment that inclement weather may affect the operation of light rail, but a bus system would not be affected by inclement weather
- Comment that bus drivers are more available to intervene in an unsafe situation, and light rail drivers would not be able to provide the same level of assistance
- Support for a bus system crossing the river and extending light rail service from Portland up to Hayden Island
- Comment that light rail can enhance a bus system, and emphasis on the positive example of this relationship in Seattle's transportation system
- Strong support for a Bus Rapid Transit system so long as it provides reliable and consistent service
- Emphasis on the importance of a reliable and consistently operating bus system; if it is not reliable and easy to use, it will not get enough ridership to be beneficial
- Support for the combined option that includes both bus and light rail systems
- Comment that commuters may desire to have a faster trip, but from an equity lens it is more desirable to have an increased number of stops in order to serve more people
- Comment that any transit system that is implemented should incorporate all needs in order to serve a wide and diverse population across both sides of the river
- Comment that increased transit service and ridership will lead to greater connectivity and cross-pollination between our two cities
- Comment that increased stops are better for disabled riders

WRAP UP

Monica shared additional engagement opportunities with the group including upcoming advisory group meetings, social media, and the program newsletter, as well as links to the recording of the current meeting, meeting material presented, and the program information library. While no additional CWG meetings are planned at this time, the program may choose to reconvene this group on an as-needed basis in the future.

Monica thanked the participants for their time and adjourned the meeting at 7:00 PM.

MEETING PARTICIPANTS

Attendees	Role/Organization
Claire Williams	At-Large Community Participant
David Poland	At-Large Community Participant
Elizabeth Harris	At-Large Community Participant
Marjorie Ledell	At-Large Community Participant
Tamara J Fuller	At-Large Community Participant
Scott Patterson	C-TRAN
Monica Tellez-Fowler	C-TRAN
Katherine Kelly	City of Vancouver
Shona Carter	Community Foundation for SW Washington
Whitney Mosback	Cowlitz Indian Tribe
Carmen Caraballo	Esther Short Park Neighborhood Association
Mónica Santos-Pinacho	Facilitator
Michi Slick	Killian Pacific
Sunrise O'Mahoney	LULAC
Mike Bomar	Port of Vancouver
Stacey Graham	The Historic Trust
Jeb Doran-TriMet	TriMet
Jeremy White	TriMet

Attendees	Role/Organization
Jordan Boldt	Vancouver Farmers Market
Saeed Hajarizadeh	Vancouver Housing Authority
Michael Walker	Vancouver's Downtown Association
Brad Phillips	IBR
Ben Deines	IBR
Casey Liles	IBR
Katy Belokonny	IBR
Ryan LeProwse	IBR
Sam Daleo	IBR
Kelly Betteridge	IBR

Additional Participants

Members of the public viewed the meeting via the YouTube livestream during the meeting.

MEETING RECORD AND MATERIALS

Meeting Recording

A recording of the meeting is available here: https://youtu.be/XAWFVpvpb40

Meeting Materials

The meeting materials are available here: https://www.interstatebridge.org/get-involved-folder/calendar/