

# EXECUTIVE STEERING GROUP (ESG) MEETING

## HIGH-LEVEL MEETING SUMMARY

December 16, 2021, 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.

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

**ESG Members not in Attendance:** Chair Scott Hughes (RTC), President Lynn Peterson (Metro),

**IBR Program Staff in Attendance:** Greg Johnson (Program Administrator), Ray Mabey (Assistant Program Administrator), John Willis (Assistant Program Manager), Chris Regan (Environmental Manager), Millicent Williams (Lead Facilitator), Kimberly Pincheira (Communications Manager), Katy Belokonny (Community Engagement), Salomé Chimuku (Equity and Public Outreach)

## Welcome, Introduction, Proposed Agenda and Updates

Millicent Williams, Lead Facilitator, welcomed the group and thanked everyone for their continued commitment towards this work. She then noted that the meeting recording had started. Millicent wished everyone a good holiday season and to take care of each other with the new variant of COVID.

Prior to beginning the agenda, Millicent noted that they have a few alternate attendees and wanted to acknowledge everyone appropriately. Millicent then went over the meeting ground rules and technical instructions for the meeting, including:

- Closed captions are available in English and Spanish
- Provided webinar participation tips.
- Public Input Instructions

Greg Johnson (IBR Program Administrator) opened the meeting by wishing everyone a happy holiday and wanted to take this time to thank everyone for their hard work. The ESG has been meeting for thirteen months and there has been a tremendous amount of hard work put in by everyone. ESG members then introduced themselves for the record. (ESG attendees have been noted at the beginning of the minutes.)

Mayor Anne McEnery-Ogle (City of Vancouver) noted that Washington State has a new chair for the Senate, Senator Marko Liias who will be coming down to meet with everyone and walk near the bridge.

Greg Johnson began his overview by stating they are getting to a critical time for the program. With 2022 coming the program will be putting solutions on the table for everyone to review and make decisions with the boards and councils. The design team is working hard at running models and sifting through alternatives analyses and screening criteria through the holidays to be ready to have materials to present by February, informing the group of the project findings. The program has been meeting with partners and discussing needs and “must haves” which have been fruitful and very informative in helping to keep the group moving forward.

One of the key things that the program has heard from our Bi-State Legislative Committee is that the schedule is critical. Program partners need time to address some of the issues and get them through all the boards and councils in a reasonable way without rushing. The conversations with federal partners (FHWA and FTA) have been strong conversations, but they have emphasized they would like to stay on schedule as much as possible. The main reason for this urgency is so that we do not miss any funding windows.

Administrator Johnson noted that he spoke with Steve Witter, TriMet Executive Director for Capital Projects and Construction, and they are putting together a technical team of transit partners to look at the schedule one more time to ensure they are on the right path to meeting the appropriate deadlines that are dictated for the 2025 funding for transit.

The team is also preparing for a large ask in the 2023 legislative sessions in each state. They know that they are going to have to have a well-defined program with a revised finance plan that speaks to what the partners and the communities have agreed upon and feel are most important for this project moving forward.

Greg shared that the program is going to be working hard to make sure we are in alignment with these target dates. With the recent federal infrastructure bill being passed, the federal agencies are working on the language that will define the grant programs. This team will be ready to submit for requested funding. We are going to be ready!

The program is still looking at the travel demand modeling and making sure they understand all the nuances that the data is revealing, and they have provided recent updates/presentations to the partners and feel that they are very close to understanding everything needed to meet the timeframes to define what this program will look like and the traffic demand.

There have been two meetings with the Bi-State Legislative Committee since the last time ESG met in November where they discussed timelines. They understand the challenges ahead and, overall, they were very positive meetings. They are looking at meeting with the Bi-State Legislative Committee again in January. February will be challenging due to their participation in the legislative sessions, but they will be meeting with them monthly to ensure everyone is up to speed with all the issues and concerns moving forward.

Greg turned the meeting over to the other ESG members to provide updates for their region. Millicent then introduced Ed Washington and Lynn Valenter, members of the IBR ESG representing the Community Advisory Group.

Lynn Valenter, co-chair of the Community Advisory Group introduced herself and noted she did not have an update at this time. Ed Washington, Oregon representative, also did not have an update but was here to make sure he was staying up to date on the program's advancements.

Millicent went around to each member asking for updates. Many noted that there were no updates at this time. Secretary Roger Millar (WSDOT) noted that he is looking forward to meeting Senator Marko Liias and helping him get up to speed on the program. He is familiar with the project and will be a great addition to the conversation. He wished Senator Hobbs well in his new role as Secretary of State.

Secretary Millar noted that they are engaged at the federal level with the implementation of what the USDOT is calling the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law. Roger noted he met with FHWA, FRA and FTA on how to implement the new law and when. He noted that when a new law like this passes, there are two questions that are often asked: When am I going to get my money? How do I get my project funded if not on the bill? With the funding, the formula money, some will be coming to the states and some of it gets tied up in the continuing resolution. The continuing resolution has put the brakes on the discretionary grants that are in the bill but are working on providing advice to the DOTs and administrations. They anticipate that the existing discretionary grant programs are likely to see opportunities next spring or summer, but for others it could be years before that money starts to flow. They are to provide people a realistic view on the schedule.

Director Kris Strickler (ODOT) thanked Roger for providing the update as he was going to speak on much of the same items. He did want to add that ODOT is currently seeking to hire a new assistant director for social equity as well as a new delivery and operations division administrator. Millicent added that this group would be happy to pass along the word and provide any recommendations.

Commissioner Mary Nolan (Metro) represents the neighbors and businesses within the impact area and more. They are looking forward to their role of providing preliminary engineering funding. Mary noted that Metro has submitted many questions to Greg Johnson and the IBR team and appreciates the timely responses and the due diligence. She noted that there will most likely be more but appreciates all efforts so far.

Matt Ransom (RTC) noted that Chair Scott Hughes' (who has been representing RTC for this project) term lapses at the end of the year and at the recent board of directors meeting it was decided that Matt will be representing RTC for the time being and looks forward to their continued partnership. Matt thanked Greg for his recap of the legislative committee meetings and appreciates the need to continue to push the schedule.

Steve Witter (TriMet) spoke about the recent TriMet board meeting and, in advance of that meeting, they have a subcommittee called the "finance and audit committee." Steve thanked the team for the briefing materials and noted that the meeting went very well. There is now a commitment from the TriMet board to engage this project topic on a regular basis at each meeting starting in the new year.

Shawn Donaghy (C-Tran) thanked Steve and Jaime Snook at TriMet for pulling together the materials for their discussion and narrowing down some of the transit thought processes as it relates around Capital Investment Grant funding. He also wanted to reiterate that C-Tran has asked that when project partners talk about schedule that it is imperative that they notify the public of what it really means in real time. He thinks it is

important to be as transparent as possible, especially when they have the opportunity to get the funding to address the bridge in a very short period of time. Millicent thanked him for raising this important concern.

Kristen Leonard (Port of Portland) took a moment to thank their partners at the Port of Vancouver and the rest of the team. The ongoing conversations around the movement of freight have been positive as they continue looking at the impacts moving forward.

Jack Burkman (Port of Vancouver) noted that after the last ESG meeting in November, the IBR team held a freight leadership meeting. He appreciated the team coordinating this and the good feedback for the design considerations for the bridge replacement. There was a statistic that was presented that involved the average weekday volume growth. He wanted to highlight why it is critical that they keep the ESG and stakeholders updated on freight. Looking from 2005 to 2019 on the I-5 bridge, general purpose traffic went up 5%, while freight went up 28%. On the I-205 bridge, the average weekday volume growth went up 14% in general purpose traffic with a 45% increase in freight traffic. Freight traffic may not be directly on the mind of many, but it is an important aspect to this replacement and keeping in front of the ESG moving forward.

Millicent thanked everyone and asked if there were any questions moving forward. Next, she introduced John Willis, Program Project Manager, and reviewed the meeting ground rules. John Willis provided an update on the IBR Solution/Draft Modified LPA and how those two things connect and how they may be different.

## OVERVIEW: IBR SOLUTION/DRAFT MODIFIED LPA

John Willis was pleased to present to this group on how they can land a regional consensus on what they will take forward into the upcoming phases. He introduced Chris Regan (IBR Environmental Manager) who joined him in providing a high-level overview of the program components.

Mr. Regan began with context; the IBR program will use a transparent data-driven process with input from partner agencies, stakeholders, and community members to inform the process that they are using to identify program components which they will move into the next stages of the program delivery and environmental review process. The goal is to enter the process around spring of 2022. Part of this work is developing a set of components that are defined by the partners that are going to advance into further analysis.

In the past they have referred to the project as the “IBR solution” but will now be transitioning the discussion of the set of components to a draft modified Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA). They are synonymous terms, and these components will advance into design and the environmental process. LPA is a federally recognized vehicle, the clear term that is used to represent that set of components for further study. The modified LPA is going to contain a high-level set of regionally adopted project components that will define the program.

The modified LPA is very important in the next steps: NEPA, demonstration of regional consensus to state and federal elected offices, and provides the necessary definition of the program support for the state and federal funding requests.

John Willis continued the discussion about how a group of technical recommendations or outcomes and screening criteria will be used to evaluate changes that they have seen since the 2013 LPA. Those changes have been represented or acknowledged by creating a set of options to look at how they respond to those changes. The four main areas they have looked at are:

- Hayden Island and Marine Drive Interchanges
- River Crossing Alignment
- North Vancouver (north of the river) Interchanges
- Transit

These changes are being evaluated with a set of screening criteria and performance measures derived from the work that has been done with the partners in the community over the past year. That work started with understanding the purpose, need, vision, and values, and linking desired outcomes and screening criteria.

Administrator Greg Johnson added that they are also looking at the demand in the corridor and what elements affect that demand. This was requested in order to understand if there is anything that modifies future demand for single occupancy vehicle trips in the corridor which will be part of the draft modified LPA.

Mayor Anne McEnery-Ogle (City of Vancouver) had a follow up question, “It was mentioned the team is looking at North Vancouver, what specifically are you looking at 39<sup>th</sup>, 42<sup>nd</sup>, Hazel Dell?” Mr. Willis clarified that he was referring to interchanges north of the river. He clarified, “Think of SR500 inside the bridge influence area and down to the river.” Mayor McEnery-Ogle added that there is no ‘North Vancouver’ and appreciated the clarification.

Mr. Willis continued his explanation. These technical options that are being developed will be evaluated through the screening criteria. The transit options will also have a process based on performance-based criteria that includes looking at operations, volumes, and ridership. All of this combined create a nonpolitical recommendation made by the IBR team which includes the partner’s staff. A good example of support they have received is from the Equity Advisory and Community Advisory Groups who provide input on the options development.

To date there has been a lot of community input gathered, as recently as a few weeks ago. The initial finding from this community engagement will be shared in January to the advisory group and the ESG. The data received from the community is quantitative and qualitative and will be used in the decision-making moving forward. In addition, the IBR team will be working with the partners’ staff and the Project Management Group to define what options and how they will be reviewed. They will be looking at all the recommendations from the different inputs through an iterative process as they get to a modified LPA, which includes the tribes and regulatory agencies.

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John continued with his presentation and the discussion around timeline. How will all of this come together? They have created a timeline that is responsive to a lot of needs including all of the modeling work which some of the first pieces could be done as early as December 23<sup>rd</sup> but other are anticipated for early Spring. As this information becomes available, they will be evaluating those individual project components as the technical work and community inputs come together. These recommendations on the different components will be done with the partner agencies with a holistic approach to the program.

By spring of 2022 they expect to have most of the modeling done, assuming no new modeling requests are requested. The IBR team wants to be sure they are being responsive and providing you the answers you are looking for and for your constituents. The team is preparing for the elevated conversations with the decision-makers for this program and the necessary endorsements of the modified LPA no later than June 2022. The team will continue to engage the community for their input and support as well.

John noted the technical team have been trying to balance the data requests with timeline to allow enough time to analyze the options but also understand the backstop of the critical timeline for pursuing state and federal funding opportunities.

John drove home that they will need to agree upon the modified LPA so they can position the program for the NEPA phase as well as for legislative funding requests. He also took the time to thank the partners' staff for all their efforts thus far.

Jo Ann Hardesty (City of Portland) asked how many languages the community engagement materials are being presented in and, when she sees BIPOC as a category, this does not really inform her of what communities of color they are investing and engaging with. She would prefer to see a more disaggregated list rather than a clump of demographic information. She appreciates that the team have been listening deeply to the conversations about community and stakeholders who have stake in this project and doing it right. Thank you.

John Willis noted that he would follow up with the list of requested languages the information is being provided in. Greg Johnson noted that they have offered the information in 12 different languages, so they are touching many different communities: African American, Hispanic, Native American, Russian/Slavic, and the deaf and blind communities in both Portland and Vancouver. Jo Ann Hardesty said that this is going to help tell the story of this project since the beginning and recognizes all of the good work being done.

Greg Johnson was happy to share something that the team is very proud of: in this year, they have touched, in one form or fashion, over 25,000+ people through surveys, group meetings, community work/advisory groups. This is an impressive metric especially during a pandemic.

Mary Nolan (Metro Councilor) had two questions regarding modeling the various options: Are they assuming that tolling is in place on all models being run and are they assuming value pricing tolling or congestion price tolling? John Willis responded that they are using a regional model which includes a variable rate tolling and the impact on the performance evaluation for the project including vehicle travel and transit ridership.

Mary Nolan followed with this question: Assuming variable tolling influences time of day traffic and may address some of the concerns that the Port raised about freight in terms of encouraging a broader distribution of that freight traffic so as to increase average speeds? John Willis responded, yes, the tolling rates do vary by peak times during the day. I think for tolling, they are looking to both the program, but also a benefit of tolling or side effect, if you will, is that it does create a bit of demand management, which improves the flow and operation of the facility for freight specifically, as you mentioned.

The next question was to get a little more clarity on what happens at the stroke of midnight in June, is there a drop-dead date to have an agreed upon modified LPA? What is that date? Greg Johnson provided a response, what they are looking for in June is the members who sit on the ESG who have the ability to endorse moving forward with the draft modified LPA into the federal review process. This includes having gone before your boards and councils and having their support as well. They are looking for your consensus.

Mary Nolan followed up with, what happens if this group comes back and says they need more time? What is the reason for the June date? To have an LPA to move forward into the federal transit process and in front of the legislators of each state. So that they have time between June and the Fall to polish the package to make sure they have met the FTA criteria in order to be in line for funding. The original due date was the end of March, but they clearly heard that was not going to be doable, so they were able to extend that timeline to June to complete additional modeling and socialization with each partners' boards.

Secretary Roger Millar (WSDOT) added that if they don't have a decision at the stroke of midnight, they don't turn into a pumpkin but as a team, all of the partners, they have an obligation to the two-state legislatures and congressional delegation to move the project forward so that they can line up for funding. In Washington State the legislature is talking about a new revenue package. If they don't move forward, it is most likely not to be included in that package. By the summer of 2022 they should have a better idea of what is happening with the discretionary grant programs available at the USDOT. My understanding is that they have all agreed as a team to put a good faith effort into getting to an LPA that they can advance in the NEPA process by June. This is not the final product and is not the final decision. This is an LPA that then goes through all the review they still have to complete but it also provides a dollar amount and a schedule that they can then take to the Oregon and Washington legislature and to the federal partners to get in line for the funding it is going to take to build the project.

Millicent thanked Secretary Roger Millar and passed the floor over to Director of Engineering and Construction Steve Witter (TriMet). FTA has a very regulated schedule for getting a project in the queue. This is regardless of whether it is a New Starts or Small Starts application, state of repair, capacity grant, etc. What is due in August is the first of a series of documents that are prepared, in order to place it into the President's proposed budget in February to then be considered for a funding recommendation in October.

Usually, projects do not move fast enough to get the recommendation in that same October as February because of the remaining FTA process and actions they must take as a local jurisdiction, but you want to be in that president's budget list; it is important to not skip a beat. Hopefully, that helps explain a little bit of what happens when the pumpkin does arrive.

Director Matt Ransom (RTC) spoke next, he feels this agenda item is extremely timely for the project and believes that this reset for the project is positive, words do matter. He interprets the words that they are using now, draft modified LPA, while it's to regulators, it is important to the constituents and stakeholders as well. When he thinks about the association of governments, of RTC, their expectation of what this project is that it will be modified appropriately based on circumstances and new information, but there is also a commitment to proceed with earnestness. Like what they are currently doing in public policy development, they are developing plans that may take years or decades to manifest, so there is consistency and expectation that Matt feels drives the work that they are all doing. So again, it is timely to do this clarification of language. Matt agreed with this direction and feels the stakeholders would understand it more clearly when they move into the spring discussion about what tasks are coming next.

Millicent asked for additional questions or anyone seeking clarification. She thanked John and Chris for their presentation.

## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT UPDATE

Millicent introduced the next group of presenters: Kimberly Pincheira, Katy Belokony, and Salomé Chimuku. She also noted that there will be a more detailed presentation in the near future discussing the project's outreach and feedback. The IBR team felt it necessary to round out the year with a recap of the series efforts that this group has been lead. Millicent stated possibly some of the questions Commissioner Hardesty raised could be addressed by this presentation.

Kimberly opened by thanking Millicent for framing the discussion for this meeting. She noted that she will provide a high-level overview of some of the engagement activities that were part of their focused and targeted efforts over the past couple of months. Today, they will discuss the different ways they tried to engage different members and groups of the public and different activities and events. Kimberly added that if there is any information not presented today, or very specific information people want to make sure they provide next month, they welcome that feedback and guidance.

Kimberly and her team provided a quick snapshot of the different activities and engagement efforts that are underway. The online survey got a lot of attention with 9,474 surveys completed in comparison to the 9,100 responses in the spring. This provided that quantitative feedback that is easier to parcel out in terms of percentages of responses. The survey closed on December 10<sup>th</sup> so the team is just diving into the results which will be summarized for the next meeting. In addition to sharing the results with the group, they will be providing an update to the technical teams to be included in their analysis with the modeling and screening criteria.

The online community survey was paired with the online open house which intended to provide information and a better understanding of the program process, focused on the preliminary list of design options. They shared what the IBR Solution looks like and how decisions are being made. Kimberly noted that the survey was available in eleven languages which will be detailed out for the next meeting, per the request from Jo Ann Hardesty (City of Portland). The entire website is available in eight languages: Spanish, Somali, Korean,



Japanese, Russian, Chinese, and Ukrainian which translated over to the open house as well. In addition, based on feedback from the community-based organizations, additional languages were provided for the listening sessions and survey – Arabic, Vietnamese, and Romanian. For the listening sessions they had Arabic, Romanian, and Thai.

Some of the other more traditional methods of outreach that will be covered in a little more detail during this presentation are:

- Community Briefings
- Listening Sessions
- Community Working Groups
- Youth Press Conference
- Freight Workshop

Kimberly then highlighted the range of ways they are trying to get the information out with a targeted push for the survey were print, digital, and radio. Social media has been very effective for the program, and they are continuing to expand these resources. The vast majority of responders said they heard about the survey from social media. The team also focused some publications on the equity priority communities and rural communities. Radio also proved to be effective and was done in both English and Spanish. One of the newest tactics of outreach was putting out transit ads with C-Tran and TriMet partners. Another new effort that was effective was the distribution of mini grants with Community Based Organizations and cohosting events with them to directly reach their membership. The program also did direct canvassing to businesses and community organizations that serve members of the public within the program area to help get the word out.

Kimberly shared that the Community Advisory Group efforts have been ongoing as they starting to dig into the details: preliminary design options, transit data, and modeling, IBR workplan and schedule, and screening criteria.

Kimberly passed it over to Salomé Chimuku who provided an overview of the community briefings and what was heard. The program held four interactive community briefings to share program information. The purpose of these meetings is to ensure that participants understand the design options. With open houses providing a lot of information, the purpose of these briefings was for the public to better inform themselves on the program.

Slide 6 provided an overview of the community-specific listening sessions and what the program heard. These specific sessions were for equity priority communities and were separate from the community briefings. There were four sessions (multilingual, BIPOC, living with a disability, and youth/lower income) held in November and co-hosted with 10 community-based organizations who were awarded mini grants. One focus of these groups was to use an affinity space to solicit feedback. An affinity space means sharing space or focus groups

with people who are from a similar background or identify similarly. With these four meetings, 352 people participated. One thing to keep in mind is that the participant numbers were most likely higher as many people were sharing screens with each other.

Slide 7 highlighted the two youth press conferences that were held in early November. This was advertised to high school and college journalists as well as media outlets and students themselves. Part of the intentional effort was to proactively engage youth as part of the conversation as this bridge will serve further generations for the next 100 years.

Salomé handed the discussion over to Katy Belokonny who began summarizing the Community Working Groups. There were four groups that met twice, eight meetings in total. See slide 8 for the snapshot of what was heard. These groups were topic-specific: active transportation, multimodal commuters, Hayden Island/Marine Drive, and downtown Vancouver. Each group ranged between 17 and 24 participants and were intentionally selected to provide well-rounded representation for discussion around these topics. There was a variety of age ranges, income levels, identities, and housing status from both sides of the river. They had representatives from community-based organizations, neighborhood associations, transportation nonprofits, and at-large community participants. The goal of these meetings was to have in-depth two-way conversations with these group participants to allow the program to better understand community priorities and concerns around these specific transportation topics. All meeting materials are available on the IBR website as well as meeting summaries.

Additional feedback that was expressed through these meetings included:

- A desire for greater transportation connectivity
- Hayden Island/Marine Drive group expressed a strong desire to see transit connections serving Hayden Island and Marine Drive. They also expressed dissatisfaction with the current Marine Drive interchange and their ability to access Hayden Island. There were also concerns about how construction may negatively impact this area.
- The Active Transportation group shared concerns for the accessibility in the ramp grades, specifically how hard it will be getting on and off the shared-use path. They encouraged the program to pay attention to the path surface materials and other design features, like railings.
- The Downtown Vancouver group shared concerns about the stacked alignment option due to the lack of direct access connections to downtown Vancouver. They have also identified a need for the program to alleviate existing heavy traffic and frequent backups in the downtown core.
- The Multimodal group shared a desire for a one-seat ride with public transit, meaning wanting fewer transfers.

The intention of forming these groups was to gather feedback during this phase of program planning, including the ability to have the participants provide feedback on the current design options. This objective

has been successfully met and at this time they do not have any future meetings scheduled however, as the program planning evolves, they will likely reconvene.

Katy then gave an update on the Freight Leadership Feedback (see slide 9) and thanked Commissioner Burkman for highlighting the importance of this aspect of the program. This freight leadership meeting also occurred in November and was hosted in conjunction with the Port of Vancouver and Port of Portland. The meeting was attended by sixteen different organization including eight different ports. The goal of the meeting was to have a conversation between local ports, IBR program, and the freight leaders of the community.

Kimberly wrapped up the discussion by sharing next steps and how to incorporate what was heard (see slide 10). It was reiterated that there will be a comprehensive community engagement report that will be publicly released next month. In the interim, they will be sharing this information with the technical staff and the agency partners. One additional thing to note is that they hosted the virtual open house on the IBR website with the intention of having it as a living page so that, ongoing, it is an easy place for the broader community to be able to follow along with the process and stay up to date with the program and its milestones.

This team will continue to assess the effectiveness of the outreach and engagement efforts and make any necessary modifications moving forward. For example, the team heard feedback that the platform used in the spring engagement was accessible with screen readers and other accessibility software. The team met with a panel, including a member from the EAG to ensure it was accessible as possible. Kimberly asked if there were any questions or specific detail that the ESG would like to see at the next update.

Millicent thanked the community outreach team for really demonstrating the tremendous amount of work that has gone into ensuring that the community is connected and engaged.

Jo Ann Hardesty (City of Portland) wanted to say how impressed she is with this team. It is extremely detailed and thoughtful. She looks forward to reading the report in January and appreciates them for addressing her questions that were asked earlier. She feels much better about how deeply they as program are engaging community members. Thank you, thank you, thank you.

Salomé Chimuku added that this particular engagement was really meaningful for them because with the partnership with the CBOs in the area, the program was able to reach many highly vulnerable people. The program has been able to do some really special things such as ASL interpretation, including a Certified Deaf Interpreter (CDI), and encompassing the large variety of language translations that the program did not considered in the beginning.

Director Greg Johnson wanted to take a minute to acknowledge the super stars and the great work from this team. They have gone beyond the minimum requirements. Salomé is being modest, but she speaks 6 languages, and her expertise is instrumental to the program's success. Her work has been tremendously outstanding with youth community along with all the other members of this team.

## PUBLIC COMMENT

Millicent agreed with Administrator Johnson and feels that this program is very fortunate to have this team. She then noted that they are moving towards the public comment period and reviewed the comment instructions and guidelines.

Brent Hamlin introduced the first commentor [1:36:01], Joe Cortright, an economist in Portland who runs the city observatory an urban policy thinktank. He is also a member of No More Freeways. He would like to address a very specific issue which is the failure of the project to produce any new traffic projections and the epic planning blunder of saying that you will know what the size and design of the bridge is and also bringing out alternatives without having prepared new and accurate and updated traffic forecasts.

The traffic forecast contained in the FEIS uses data from 2005. That is more than 15 years old. Now, a lot has been made about the need to deal with the change in circumstances. The project has not gone back and looked to see whether the forecasts based on 15-year-old data are even accurate. But the point is, they need to have current and accurate forecasts to determine exactly how many vehicles are likely to travel on this corridor. Also, they know from the first iteration of the CRC the forecasts were deeply flawed because the models used to produce the forecasts did not address the impact of tolling on traffic levels. Studies done by ODOT and WSDOT after the FEIS was adopted showed that tolling would cause traffic on I-5 bridges to drop by half, which would produce the need for actually no increase in capacity. So, until you prepare actual forecasts which are now not scheduled to be done until the second or third or fourth quarter of the year, i.e. after your asking people to make the design and go-ahead decision is a tragic mistake and is clearly a violation of both FHWA and NEPA guidelines and is likely to lead to a legal challenge to this project. Thank you

Next commentor is Bob Ortblad [1:38:25], a Washington resident and 50 years as a civil engineer. He asked the members of the ESG to raise their hand if they had a chance to read his public comment and thanked those who had. It is not too late for the IBR to change course. British Columbia had a bridge designed to cross the Frasier River and then they hired a tunnel consultant and then changed their mind to build a tunnel under the river. Same thing happened in Denmark, had an 11-mile bridge design between Denmark and Germany and again hired a versed tunnel consultant and changed their mind to a tunnel and are now building the largest project in Europe. They should do the same.

Unfortunately, the IBR has spent \$26 million manufacturing public acceptance on three bridge alternatives. Two from the old CRC designs and one new stacked alignment which is basically bizarre and impossible to build.

The best I-5 option is an immersed tunnel, however it has been disqualified by a misleading IBR report which needs to be retracted. My letter calling for its retraction in Clark County today and has been posted on Twitter and has received 700 views. Again, please read my public comment. I feel that they need to have a fourth option, the three bridge options are steep and just 1960s design. Thank you very much.

Third commentor, Malcolm Hodge [1:40:37], community business banker who has been in the Portland Metro region about 25 years. In my opinion, an I-5 replacement bridge over the Columbia is critically important. Were it to be unavailable for an extended period of time, traffic in the region would become unacceptably bad and the region's economic vitality would suffer.

The impact on area businesses (the economic engine for the Portland metro area) would be significant. Staffing and employee retention would be much more difficult. Recruiting new employees and companies to the region would be challenging if crossing the Columbia River is limited to I-205, or going way up the gorge or down river. I've worked as a small business banker for a long time and believe that basic levels of service must be provided for the employers to thrive. Crossing the Columbia River on I-5 is, in my opinion, a non-negotiable service the region needs to provide.

They are moving to a transportation future that will be weaned off fossil fuels and I support that, but single occupancy electric vehicles or hybrid vehicles, delivery vans, and trucks will remain as primary modes of transportation. They need to recognize this reality and replace the I-5 bridge. Thank you very much. Millicent thanked everyone for their updates and comments and began the conversations for next steps and agenda items for the next meeting.

## CONFIRM UPCOMING MEETING TOPICS, NEXT STEPS AND SUMMARY

Matt Ransom (RTC) wanted to revisit the community engagement. He provided compliments for the impressive work the team completed and said he was looking forward to the comprehensive body of work. If the project hasn't done this, he would encourage the project to look at this opportunity think about a focus group/cohort that are doing economic development, looking at inbound recruiting opportunities. I think it is important for this group to understand how other people perceive our region, notably their perceptions of the economy, their perceptions of the infrastructure. This might be insightful and thinking about the prosperity of this region in the future. He has heard anecdotal impressions about people's reactions to the need for investment. If there is an opportunity for that kind of focus group specific to recruitment economic development, growing economy and job base, think that's a key area that they should investigate.

Administrator Greg Johnson followed up that the team has received a request to create a business working group that want to make their voices heard on this issue. What Matt has outlined is a great example of some of the information that could be gleaned from such a group. The IBR team is looking into the possibility of this creation because there are some voices that want to be heard in this discussion and so far, have not had a structured way to provide it, so thank you for that comment.

Salomé Chimuku added that one of the things that was great about their specific listening sessions with the CBO partners is the large number of participants interested in what happens with this project and how it can benefit their community. She feels that the minority groups, like the Somali American and Russian, are represented within the equity priority groups and believes it is good to bring them together, especially because these are small business owners, DBE businesses. Moving forward it would be beneficial to the program to have them give their perspective on local needs. Groups like the high school youth and college

attendees also have a huge stake in what happens moving forward, along with future generations, and want to make sure the program gets it right.

Jo Ann Hardesty (City of Portland) wanted to support Salomé. She thinks that businesses have a lot of ways to provide input. She would be concerned about putting a group together that may feel like they have outsized influence on the outcome of this project. She thinks the outreach team is really doing a good job of engaging in ways that they have never seen on a major transportation project like this. She would not like to repeat the mistakes of the past where special interests have much more ability to shape the outcomes. She feels the business voices are important. She thinks the freight community's voice is important, but she doesn't think their voices should be outsized relative to the people who will need to operate within new systems that they are creating.

Administrator Greg Johnson commented that they are not giving any one voice an outsized influence on the program. They are listening to every voice that wants to have a say in this. So, it is not a matter of someone pushing the group in a direction. They are listening to every voice they hear and consider it of equal importance.

Jo Ann Hardesty (City of Portland) appreciates Administrator Johnson's addition but at the end of the day everybody is not going to get what they want. Again, if they are not expanding it so that other people think they have ownership of the decision-making which she believes is the executive committee. They want people to feed in but would like to be clear, if you have 500 opinions, 500 people weighing in, at some point they are going to have to whittle it down. As an executive committee they have to make a decision about how they move forward. So, there is one thing to have voice, but decision-making is this body's responsibility.

Millicent thanked Jo Ann Hardesty and Administrator Johnson for their discussion. Kimberly started by thanking Commissioner Hardesty. One thing she wanted to note, while they are trying to be relatively comprehensive in their engagement efforts, there is a lot happening that wasn't reflected in the presentation today. She can't count the number of presentations and briefings that Administrator Johnson and others have given to other organizations throughout the region, including business organizations, other CBOs, and other activities whose input was not necessarily reflected today. There are a lot of other outreach activities happening to try and stay connected to other organizations and throughout the community as well.

Millicent then moved the discussion to next month's meeting. She wanted to recognize that the next meeting will be full but will also follow two significant holidays and just before another one. She noted that they want to make sure they are not overloading the agenda to allow for fruitful discussion. She also wants to give the team enough time to provide all the information that is critical to inform decision making. She emphasized the importance of these discussion because every piece of each conversation does have an impact on the work that the team is doing to move to the next steps.

There are two thing that they are going to be discussing: the community outreach report and doing a deeper dive into the information provided; and the fiscal impact assessment that has been done. They recognize that it is important for there to be clarity about what they believe the impacts of the bridge will be to the

community that will be impacted by it. They will have information to share with you to help inform the way that you engage around the project specific to how it will benefit communities, whether that's residents, businesses, each of the jurisdictions, all those things they recognize to be important. Please note that the agenda may grow a bit based on the development by the team over the next few weeks. They will also provide the full package of meeting information not less than a week in advance so that the group is prepared to participate in the meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 11:55 a.m.

## MEETING RECORD AND MATERIALS

### Meeting Recording

A recording of the meeting is available here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TEvJsP0fdOw&t=2s>

### Meeting Materials

The meeting materials are available here:

<https://www.interstatebridge.org/get-involved-folder/calendar/esg-december-16-meeting/>