

EVENT SUMMARY: Multimodal Commuter Listening Session

The Interstate Bridge Replacement program is committed to engaging in two-way conversations with the community. Listening sessions are one of the tools the program is using to have targeted discussions with members of the community to gain insights on specific topics. The following is a high-level summary of the feedback captured during breakout session conversations and live audience participation survey responses during the Multimodal Commuter Listening Session held on April 22, 2021.

The Multimodal Commuter Listening Session was attended by 68 community members. Most participants commute by automobile or public transit. A few people indicated they do not use one consistent mode of transportation for commuting purposes, but rather use several (i.e., a mix of biking and public transit) or vary their mode from day-to-day (will sometimes drive and other times bike). Congestion, safety, and reliability were the primary issues participants experience when commuting across the Interstate Bridge. Several participants expressed support for increased public transit options across the Interstate Bridge, potentially including improvements to bus service or light rail. Others voiced safety and reliability concerns with the use of public transit. Additional solutions identified to solve commuting issues include widening the bridge, improving interchanges, and eliminating bridge lifts. Overall, participants want to reduce travel times and increase reliability.

AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION QUESTION RESPONSES

1. What mode of transportation do you use to commute across the Interstate Bridge?

- Automobile (72%)
- Public Transit (36%)
- Bike (18%)
- Walking/rolling (0%)

2. On average, how many trips do you take across the Interstate Bridge? (A trip is driving across the bridge twice – to your destination and back)

- One trip per day (38%)
- 3-4 trips per week (28%)
- Several trips per month (18%)
- Occasionally (8%)
- Never (3%)

- Multiple trips per day (0%)

3. Before COVID-19 what was the length of your commute?

- 10-15 miles (33%)
- More than 25 miles (21%)
- 15-20 miles (14%)
- 1-5 miles (12%)
- 5-10 miles (12%)
- 20-25 miles (9%)

4. Before COVID-19, what time of day do you commute from home?

- 6-9am (70%)
- 9am-1pm (9%)
- 3-6pm (9%)
- Midnight-6am (7%)
- 1-3pm (5%)
- 6-9pm (0%)
- 9pm-Midnight (0%)

5. Before COVID-19, what time of day did you commute to home?

- 3-6pm (63%)
- 6-9pm (19%)
- 1-3pm (9%)
- 9am-1pm (5%)
- 6-9am (2%)

- 9pm-Midnight (2%)
- Midnight-6am (0%)

6. Is this the first time you have engaged with the program?

- Yes (65%)
- No (35%)

7. How would you like to be engaged in the future?

- Seek input through surveys (45%)
- Host virtual or in-person events (34%)
- Provide access to team members (office hours) (14%)
- Use social media (7%)

8. Which of the following digital tools do you use to get program information?

- None of the above (50%)
- Program newsletter (38%)
- Facebook (22%)
- Instagram, Twitter, YouTube (0%)

BREAKOUT ROOM DISCUSSIONS

What are the issues you experience while commuting across the Interstate Bridge?

- The commuter bus is a positive experience, but using light rail expands commute time.
- Length of time spent on I-5 and Interstate Bridge is too long.
- Bridge is too narrow and dangerous to cyclists. Would love to see a multimodal bridge.
- Need a better carpool lane.
- Support for bus rapid transit across bridge.

- For students that have never been to Portland, how can we reduce obstacles to travel?
- Need for easy connections to transit.
- The commuter driving experience is unpleasant – would rather be biking or using transit.
- Would like the program to consider the “Common Sense Alternative.”
- Need to have support from all communities.
- Supportive of tolls if they end after the bridge is paid for.
- Don't tear down the existing bridge – use for pedestrian/bike access.
- Express bus is not reliable unless you use it before 7am.
- Need for commuter rail option.
- Current bike lane across bridge is dangerous.
- Need to consider equity and access for different modes of transportation.
- Limited merging room (SR-14 and Jantzen beach off-ramps, for example).
- Concerns with tolls (penalty for late payments).
- Build a bridge for the next 100 years that is not exclusively car centric.
- I live on the Columbia River and my main commerce center is downtown Vancouver. It takes a long time just to get onto the freeway. Takes more time to get to the bridge than across the bridge.
- Lots of ways to answer this question. There is nothing good about the bridge. It's an antique. Bridge lifts are a pain if in a car, and a whole other thing if on a bike in rain, dark etc. I can feel the bridge rumbling under my feet.
- I live NW Vancouver and have no other options. The choice is to drive or bike. It takes the same amount time to e-bike vs. traffic.
- Pre-bridge issue: HOV lane out of Portland goes nowhere. It may give an opportunity to go a little faster, but the lane goes nowhere, and you have to merge back into traffic before the bridge.
- Big trucks are a problem, especially during commuting hours. Why don't we examine a freight traffic moratorium across the bridge during peak travel periods? This is a big frustration. Some truckers are not as hospitable as they could be.

- Supportive of public transit (including MAX light rail service). Traffic is an issue. Bridge lifts and accidents add to commute times, and the HOV lanes are never monitored.
- Currently, public transit has no dedicated travel space and does not operate frequently enough. I am worried that more lanes would equal more cars. I am supportive of congestion pricing instead of tolls, and high-capacity transit with its own dedicated space.
- Need to consider safety issues around the big trucks (freight movement).
- Suggest a dedicated large truck lane to address safety concerns.
- We need a streamlined system to get to work and the airport.
- Mass transit reliability factor has been proven even globally. We need transit improvements in this corridor.
- I'm a cyclist, bus rider, and auto-driver. Consider people that use multiple modes to travel through the program area.
- Suggestion to explore a tube tunnel option, rather than a bridge. For example, Canada uses an immersed tube tunnel. A tunnel is a much better choice for all the modes of transportation. You are protected from the weather, better for transit, and addresses grade/height issues. A tube tunnel is common in other places of the world as well.
- I experience congestion. Large congestion between I-405 and Jantzen Beach.
- Speed picks up when you cross the state line into Washington.
- I battle traffic when traveling back into Vancouver from Portland.
- Does the bridge truly solve the congestion problems?
- I avoid I-5 and take other routes through Portland to reach the Interstate Bridge faster.
- I experience accidents and bridge lifts.
- I experience close-space ramps.
- Commuters make illegal turns which causes congestion.
- Who would operate/own light rail transit once it gets into Vancouver?

What would help improve your commuting experience across the Interstate Bridge? What do you believe the program needs to address relative to commuters?

- Create wider lanes, they are too narrow currently.
- Light rail.
- Full sight line on the bridge.
- Limited sight distance (hump on the bridge) limits capacity/speeds on the bridge. It acts as a safety factor. People go slow until they get past that point and then it becomes free flow.
- Improve the interchanges.
- Traveling north from Portland into Vancouver, the SR-14 on-ramp loop is slow. Traveling south from Vancouver into Portland, the SR-14 off-ramp limits northbound speeds on the Interstate Bridge.
- The main problem with commuting is the congestion. Mass transit (especially light rail transit) has to be part of the solution to solve the bumper-to-bumper traffic. The bridge lift also has to be solved.
- Congestion and bridge lifts have gotten out of hand and mass transit seems to be the best solution.
- Time is our current currency of congestion pricing. I am forced to commute at a specific time. No reliability.
- I am a big proponent of light rail. I moved from north Portland to Vancouver and would love to see light rail extended for continuity of the travel trip.
- Light rail caused crime and many other problems near the area I lived.
- I suggest both raising and expanding the bridge, and to accommodate river traffic like other cities.
- Solutions include widening the bridge and raise the bridge to accommodate river traffic without a lift.
- Would like to see light rail extended into Vancouver. Would also like to see more fluid movement transportation.
- HOV lanes.
- Tolling. Could use tolling as an incentive (use transit as way to avoid a toll).
- Incentivize other ways to travel. I don't feel safe biking across the bridge. It causes anxiety as there is not enough space between cars and non-motorized users.
- Don't just build a bridge for today, build for the next 10-20 years. Make sure there is space on the bridge for people on all modes of transportation.

- If you do toll, the lanes should be express routes. Don't have 300 cars jamming up to get across the bridge.
- Will tolls be for all vehicles or just single-occupancy vehicles/motorcycles? The dynamics of paid vs. free lanes make sense. Tolls are a way to pay for bridge but there should be a benefit that comes from it.
- As the region continues to grow, we won't have capacity for everyone to take single-occupancy trips. E-bikes may be a way to get around. The beauty of MAX light rail is even if we don't have transit all over the region, people can travel to high-capacity transit and it will help with congestion.
- Have dedicated transit lanes so travel times are consistent.
- Idea of toll lane as "option" would be something acceptable. I am opposed to idea of across-the-board toll. I would take a longer commute to avoid paying a toll.
- Interested in having MAX light rail go into Vancouver. Wants to access Portland airport by light rail.

What were your commute patterns pre-COVID? How have they changed? What are your anticipated commuter patterns post-COVID?

- Pre-COVID, I commuted 5 days/week. Left at 6:20am and returned home between 4-6pm. I anticipate commuting 2-3 days per week post-COVID.
- Traffic and rush hour is back. I am sitting on bridge for 40+ minutes after 3pm.
- Pre-COVID, I was working downtown and commuting every day. Post-COVID, I will be traveling further for a new job and worried about increased commute time. Would like commute options that don't involve a car.
- Pre-COVID, I took the commuter bus from Salmon Creek to Portland (one hour or more commute). When COVID began I was concerned about taking the bus and started traveling via car.
- I have returned to my regular commute and traffic seems back to pre-COVID levels.
- I work a graveyard hospital shift and my commute hasn't changed, but once COVID began, the commute became simpler/quicker. As COVID restrictions ease, traffic is building again, and slowdowns are happening. Congestion will probably return to pre-COVID levels eventually.
- Pre-COVID, I commuted daily on weekdays from Hazel Dell to Portland Convention Center. I commuted by car to Delta Park and then by transit. I would prefer a one seat ride. Post-COVID, I will probably commute 2-3 days a week by the same modes.

- I am still working at my office, so commute is pretty much the same. I avoided public transit when COVID first began to spread.
- Pre-COVID, I commuted to an office daily. I currently work remotely but anticipate commuting 2 - 3 days a week for a hybrid work situation. I agree that traffic congestion has been increasing.
- Pre-COVID, I commuted 3-4 days a week, but now working mostly remotely. Biggest hassle is once you get on the MAX it is reliable from a time standpoint, but if there is traffic on the bridge you still get stuck trying to get to the MAX station.
- I am an event manager and normally carry lots of materials with me, plus I travel to many different destinations. As a result, a car is my preferred method of commuting. Not sure what the future of events will look like and how that will affect my commute.
- If there is reliable mass transit, I will use mass transit more.
- Traffic congestion remains a huge issue.
- I will adjust my schedule to try to make my commute easier versus just following the typical commute start and end times like I did pre-COVID.
- My commute patterns vary daily depending upon my work/business trips. Current travel times show that mornings have become less busy, but afternoons are almost back to pre-COVID flows.
- I make creative stops such as picking up groceries or stopping at the gym.
- I am driving less and will likely continue to do so post-COVID.
- Traffic has picked up since summer of 2020.
- There is still traffic between 2-5pm.

If you primarily drive across the Interstate Bridge, why is that the mode of travel you choose? (Reliability, transit time, multiple transfers, trip chaining or linking trips, etc.)

- There are long wait times for public transportation.
- I drive my car to get to various meetings throughout the day.
- I take light rail into Portland even when not commuting.
- It takes just as long to drive as it does to walk.
- If I don't want to risk a bridge-lift and have to ensure a specific arrival time, I drive to the MAX station.

- The load I carry in my car is too great for mass transit, that's why I have to drive.
- We loved living in downtown Vancouver but the load of traffic in downtown Vancouver (i.e., back-up) was unbearable.
- Multiple stops make it impossible to commute via transit.
- I would drive to a MAX line to ensure I would make it to my destination on time.
- It takes extra time to wait for transit before and after work. I want to get home, not wait 20-30 minutes for a bus or the MAX. Plus, vandalism at train stations and bus stations is a factor.
- Time/hassle is the largest factor. If I'm on a bus or train, I can get more done.
- I work graveyard. My shift starts at 6pm and I'm off at 6:30am. Other options are limited. Driving allows me to get to work and home quickly.
- I have a cello/equipment and need to have space. Also, timing/flexibility is an issue.
- I do drive once a month but use transit mostly and bike (for exercise). There are limitations crossing the bridge, but it does work. I try to avoid driving, so mix up my commute with transit and biking.
- Biking, rather than driving, is more supportive of my mental health. I e-bikes 8 miles each way in all weather, even on the bridge. When I worked at Nike, I used to bike and then take MAX out to Beaverton.

If you take transit across the Interstate Bridge, do you transfer to get to your destination? How many times?

- I choose a route with the least number of transfers.
- I will use a bike instead of taking transfers.
- I use TriMet and then transfer to C-TRAN.
- I have to make two transfers to get to the MAX.
- I take the bus from Vancouver to the yellow line and then transfer to MAX in downtown Portland.
- Take the express bus from Salmon Creek to downtown Vancouver and didn't have to transfer. It worked well, but if I worked outside of downtown Vancouver, I would drive a vehicle.
- Too many transfers to use transit and it would take hours instead of just driving (transfers include both bus and MAX).

What role do you see multimodal transportation playing in the Interstate Bridge Replacement program?

- Safe, comfortable experience for all forms of travel. I will currently bike, but not able to walk/run across the bridge.
- Allow for a more community feel for the greater Portland region.
- I have safety concerns with a high bridge due to the grades. Traveling under the river via tunnel is the best solution.
- I would like to be able to ride a bike to the MAX and travel to Portland without a car at any time of the day.
- Previous CRC project had a safe separation between all modes of travel. Need a separation from the exhaust and fumes of vehicles.
- Have transit and active transportation options. Bridge lifts shouldn't stop traffic. Build a bridge that provides for everyone regardless of mode.
- Vision in general is not to be in wildfire season in April. Global warming not flooding Hayden Island. Kids not saddled with debt. Jobs and housing balanced. TDM, not rely on fossil fuel, and people having access to transit.
- We can't build our way out of problems with freeway expansion. Don't ruin the view of downtown Vancouver. Build for the future and make the bridge an inviting space where people want to be.
- Access to the bridge is important for Hayden Island. Consider an option for local access to the island.
- As much as I don't like crossing now, the view is beautiful. Create a space where people can bike/walk and enjoy the view. Currently, one of biggest landmarks in Vancouver is the I-5 bridge. It would be nice if it was even more beautiful and people could visit.
- The bridge needs to serve a lot of people. It's not just for cars or transport. Bonus if it's an enjoyable experience.

What do you consider when you make your choice for commuting? i.e., Time, cost, environmental impact, trip chaining (making many stops within one trip), other

- Environment is most important. I'm okay with a longer commute if it means using less fossil fuels.
- Ease of use and reliability.

- Amount of time it takes me to get places is biggest consideration. Concerned about public safety when using public transit.
- Drive time.
- I consider cost and time.
- I would prefer to have a transit option instead of driving.
- I would bike if possible to do so in under an hour (right now biking adds 20 minutes to commute, plus it's dangerous).
- Environment is biggest consideration. I would like to see electric power be used for rail commuting.
- Time of day due to congestion. I could have spent that time in other ways.
- Congestion diverts people to further away stores/locations, which is also causing environmental impact.
- Cost and lack of reliability. I would prefer to use transit.
- Congestion causes people to consider if the trip is worth it or if they will go elsewhere.

Do you use navigation apps on your phone to choose your commute? If so, which app? Does this influence your mode of choice? If you are driving, does this influence your route of choice? Do you follow the proposed route from the app or do you follow your instincts and stay on the roads you know?

- Waze – it has real-time traffic adjustments.
- Google Maps – it is helpful with freeways, but variability with side streets.
- I use Google Maps in the morning and Trip Check in the evening.
- If the app shares to go off the freeway and take alternate routes, I will drive through neighborhoods.
- I use Google Maps in the morning (when I am less awake and have less time to look at other options) and TripCheck/Local News Traffic Maps during the evening commute as I look at the congestion/speed color maps and decide the best route for my home commute.
- I use an app to manage congestion issues in real time.
- I use my phone app to educate myself about congestion. If the traffic is heavy, I change to another freeway.

- I cut through St. Johns to avoid congestion.
- I take the same route usually. I go to new places a lot and use an app at those times.
- Not normally. If choosing between bridges it isn't because of what app says, but I do make considerations. I will sometimes use I-205 because it is faster even though I live within 1/2 mile of the I-5 bridge.
- I use quite a few transit apps to find stop times and see if a route will be late. I will adjust my route based on the fastest travel time.
- I use Waze to plot a route to the bridge from my house because sometimes local roads are better than I-5.
- I am a creature of habit. If I know where I'm going, I will take the route I know. The only time I use an app is if I'm going somewhere unfamiliar.
- Yes, I use Google Maps. Last November there was a particularly bad day and I ended up driving home and grabbing a bike.
- I use Google Maps because it tells you where the accidents are located.
- I would use an app to compare express bus time vs. drive time.
- I use Trip Check to compare I-5 vs. I-205 and use that information to decide my route.
- I need an app to know where the 105 bus is located.