

EXECUTIVE STEERING GROUP (ESG)

HIGH-LEVEL MEETING SUMMARY

Date and Time: March 17, 2026, 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m.

Location: Zoom and YouTube Livestream

Executive Steering Group Members in Attendance: Dan Eisenbeis (Port of Portland), Councilor Juan Carlos Gonzalez (Metro), Julianna Marler (Port of Vancouver), Mayor Anne McEnerny-Ogle (City of Vancouver), Secretary Julie Meredith (WSDOT), Scott Patterson (C-TRAN), Matt Ransom (Southwest Washington Regional Transportation Council), Jamie Snook (TriMet), Interim Director Lisa Sumption (ODOT), Lynn Valenter (CAG Co-Chair), Millicent Williams (City of Portland)

IBR Program Staff in Attendance: Brent Baker (Financial Structures Lead), Carley Francis (Interim Program Administrator), Alan Keizur (Cost Estimate Validation Process (CEVP) Risk Lead), Lisa Keohokalole Schauer (Facilitator)

WELCOME, INTRODUCTION, PROPOSED AGENDA AND UPDATES

The meeting's facilitator Lisa Keohokalole Schauer opened by addressing standard protocols. She shared public comment instructions, went over ground rules, and reviewed the agenda.

ESG members introduced themselves and gave relevant updates from their respective organizations.

PROGRAM UPDATES

Interim IBR Program Administrator Carley Francis provided an update on the Program's continued commitment to delivering the Modified Locally Preferred Alternative (MLPA). Francis shared that the vision has not changed, but the path to get there will be longer. Francis outlined the core projects, including building a replacement bridge, connecting the new bridge to Interstate 5, extending light rail to Vancouver and removing the existing bridge. Existing funding will be used on the bridge replacement contract, which will begin moving forward this year.

IBR Cost Estimate Validation Process (CEVP) Risk Lead Alan Keizur presented a breakdown of the updated cost estimate. Keizur shared Program changes from 2022 to 2026, including a schedule extension, changes to bridge design, repackaging of construction contracts, and updates to quantities and unit costs. Keizur outlined the three major components of the Program cost estimate: base cost estimate, risk and escalation. Keizur explained the multi-step approach used to develop the updated cost estimate.

Keizur shared the updated cost estimate range for the five-mile corridor is \$13.5 to \$15.2 billion with a likely cost of \$14.4 billion. Within that range the base cost estimate is \$7.8 billion, the risk is \$4.2 billion and the escalation is \$2.4 billion. Keizur outlined the reasons for the cost estimate increase: escalation impacts,

schedule extension impacts, scope and quantity updates that increased base cost, risk impacts, and increased probability costs.

Francis shared an updated Program schedule produced as part of the cost estimate process. Francis clarified that construction was previously anticipated to begin in 2026. However, due to the two-year NEPA delay, the new target is 2028. The replacement bridge is expected to be complete six to seven years from the start of construction.

Francis also discussed next steps, including identifying cost saving opportunities, completing the required Financial Plan and subsequent Financial Plan Annual Updates, and sharing updated cost estimates at major milestones.

NEAR-TERM SCHEDULE UPDATES

Francis presented key milestones the Program must hit to maintain funding and begin construction. These include finalizing the Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS) and issuing a Record of Decision (ROD), finalizing an initial financial plan, amending federal grants to ensure the Bridge Investment Grant is executed by the end of September, beginning the procurement process for the Columbia River Bridge, and continuing the STIP/MTIP processes.

CORE SET OF PROJECTS

Francis discussed current available funding and plans to begin the identified core set of projects, including construction of the Columbia River Bridge with light rail to Waterfront Station in Vancouver, connection of the new bridge to I-5, and removal of the existing bridge. She also addressed the gap in funding to deliver this core set of projects and the ways in which the Program is working with partners to identify future funding throughout the phased approach.

Francis shared next steps for advancing a bridge contract, which include publishing requests for qualifications (RFQ) in Q2 2026 and requests for proposals (RFP) in Q4 2026. A contractor will be selected in 2027. By utilizing a progressive design-build delivery method the Program allows innovation with early design-builder input in design and permitting, a bundling of efficiencies and progressive construction packages, and reduces change order and claims through risk sharing.

Light Rail Transit will progress by building the replacement bridge and pursuing up to \$1.0 billion in funding through the Federal Transit Administration's Capital Investment Grant (CIG) program.

Removing the existing bridge will be a requirement for the Coast Guard's permit to construct the new bridge. Removal can begin as soon as the new bridges are operational. Additional funding will be required for removal.

Francis reminded the ESG that phasing of megaprograms is not unique to IBR and has been the case regionally and nationally. A phased approach allows the IBR Program to manage risks, control costs and deliver benefits sooner, rather than waiting for all the funding to be in place.

Brent Baker, IBR Financial Structures Lead, provided a detailed explanation of the Program's funding status. He noted that while major funding sources are identified, not all funds are fully secured or obligated yet. The initial phase of the project is mostly funded, with a gap of about \$450 million, but the full \$7.65 billion for the core set of projects faces a gap of up to \$1.2–\$2.2 billion depending on the availability of funding from the FTA's CIG program. Funding is expected to phase in over time through grants and toll revenues, with gaps potentially emerging in the early 2030's. To close these gaps, the Program is pursuing strategies such as increasing toll funding capacity, reducing costs through design and contracting efficiencies, managing risks, and seeking additional funding.

QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS

CAG Co-Chair Lynn Valenter asked for clarification on the addition of the removal of the bridge to the \$5.9 billion, seeing as that does not seem discretionary. Francis explained that the Program is focused on what is included in the funded phase, which is related to what the Program will request to be programmed in MTIP and STIP. The time frame for removing the bridges is in 2035, creating time to address those funds and permit requirements.

RTC Executive Director Matt Ransom expressed his appreciation for the presentation of information. Ransom shared his confidence in the Program to fill the funding gaps and see success in the phased approach.

Vancouver Mayor Anne McEnery-Ogle asked for clarity on the cost and potential completion date of phase one and the core set of projects. Francis shared that the first step is \$5.9 billion with bridge construction targeted to start in 2028 with a construction taking 6-7 years. Details on timing will be solidified when a contractor is hired. Light rail construction is expected to begin in 2030 and go until 2036. Bridge removal is expected to begin in 2035 and could take a couple of years.

Metro Councilor Juan Carlos Gonzalez acknowledged balancing disappointment at the core projects while still focusing on delivering what the Program can do for the community. Councilor Gonzalez asked how the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and Federal Transit Administration (FTA) responded to the much smaller public transportation scope outlined in the updated cost estimate as it relates to the \$100 million awarded by the FTA. Francis shared that the Program communicated with local contacts at both agencies and acknowledges that there is significant work ahead, and the Program is committed to continuing transparent work with them.

Councilor Gonzalez asked if the MLPA needs to be updated and if there is any additional NEPA work to be expected with the 2045 phasing. Francis explained that all the work in the five-mile Program is covered under the NEPA process, and the states remain committed to that body of work. The Final SEIS explains sequencing

as a component of delivering the Program. The light rail component is different in this first step; however, in the long term it is still anticipated to extend to the Evergreen station.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Bob Ortblad, a retired civil engineer, commented asserting a tunnel option as a cost saving alternative.

Ron Arp, president of Identity Clark County and coordinator of the Clark County Transportation Alliance and the Southwest Washington Freight and Commerce taskforce, shared support for the IBR Program and the work completed over the past ten years. Arp recognized the Program is moving towards construction in a time of rising costs for complicated Programs. Arp shared the elimination of a fixed-span bridge and is waving the green flag to get the project underway.

NEXT STEPS

IBR Interim Program Administrator Carley Francis shared upcoming milestones, including ongoing partner updates, completion of the NEPA process, updating the financial plan, and transitioning to construction. Francis reaffirmed the state's commitment to building the five-mile Program over time.

Keohokalole Schauer shared words from Governor Ferguson: "There are two things that are certain: We must replace this bridge, and number two: delaying a project has never made costs go down. The cheapest bridge you build is the one you start today," and words from a community member: "The best bridge is the bridge that gets built."

Councilor Juan Carlos Gonzalez asked two final questions. Councilor Gonzalez said he understands that the first big package is led by WSDOT and wants to ensure a fair portion of the jobs go to Oregonians. Francis expressed that there are core contracting assumptions built into WSDOT's program to ensure there is fair access to those jobs and opportunities and ongoing work to be done with an interest in those jobs coming to the region.

Councilor Gonzalez asked ODOT Interim Director Sumption how the state plans to balance funding the IBR Program with other ongoing infrastructure investments in Oregon. Interim Director Sumption explained that today is a reconfirmation of the commitment from partners and they can continue to discuss how to prioritize infrastructure needs, including convincing policymakers that this is worth investing in.

CLOSING

Francis closed the meeting with gratitude for the partnership of the ESG members and her excitement for this milestone.

The meeting adjourned at 02:31 p.m. and has approximately 300 public views on YouTube.

March 17, 2026



A recording of the meeting is available here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=txP0pQyvH98&t=4s>

The meeting materials are available here: <https://www.interstatebridge.org/get-involved-folder/calendar/esg-march-17-2026-meeting/>