

Community Task Force (CTF)

MEETING NOTES

November 12, 2007

5:30 to 8:30 p.m.

SMILE Station

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Meeting Objectives

- Meet with Multnomah County Commissioner and PAG Chair Maria Rojo de Steffey to discuss PAG recommendations for the EIS alternatives.
- Receive current information on local funding options.
- Review with Bridge Type Working Group criteria for bridge types.

Key Points

- In an update of PAG actions, Commissioner de Steffey said the group adopted most of the CTF recommendations. She also added that PAG members have responsibilities to many constituencies, including potential funders.
- The County needs to secure its portion of local funding before applying for federal funds for the bridge. Public support seems to favor an increase in passenger vehicle registration fees over other options. A local funding option may be on the May 2008 ballot.

Action Items Completed

- No action was taken.

Action Items

- At its December meeting, the CTF will choose bridge types to recommend to the PAG.
- CTF requests more conversation with the PAG before further actions are taken.

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Attendees

CTF Members: Barbara Barber, Jason Barbour, Bill Dickey, John Fyre, Dorothy Gage, Laura Jackson, Ken Love, Richard Marantz, Tina Nunez, Lidwien Rahman, William Ross, Scott Thayer, Robert Wilhelm, Brian Wilson and Sharon Wood Wortman.

Staff: Multnomah County: Ian Cannon, Michael Eaton, Mike Lynch, David Martinez, Mike Pullen; CH2M Hill: Lwin Hwee and Marcy Schwartz; Metro: Tim Collins; Cogan Owens Cogan: Elaine Cogan and Ellie Fiore; Bridge Consultant: David Goodyear.

Guests: Doug Allen, Barbara Bernstein, Dick Brenneke, Ruth and Richard Broder, Patrice Jennings, Bruce Johnson, Lee Pullman, Diana Richardson, Dick Springer, Paddy Tillett and Tom Walsh.

Welcome and Introductions

Elaine Cogan opened the meeting, thanking everyone for attending. She explained that this was an informational meeting only and no decisions would be made.

Note: In the following summary, comments from the CTF are in italics; comments from staff and others are in regular type.

Meeting with Maria Rojo de Steffey, Multnomah County Commissioner and Chair, Policy Advisory Group (PAG)

Commissioner: Thanks for accommodating me and for your fantastic work, time and energy. I understand there was some disappointment after last PAG meeting. I have been involved in the Sellwood bridge project for a few years and have many constituencies. These include the community at large, the federal, state and county governments, the Joint Policy Advisory Committee (JPAC) and the CTF. I understand the disappointment that PAG did not accept all the CTF recommendations, but they did accept nearly all of them.

Brian Wilson: At the PAG meeting, I observed there were some higher-level policies the CTF was not aware of, or was unable to consider as part of our process. Could we have done a better job with more information?

Commissioner: You did the best you can do. ODOT representative, Jason Tell is on the PAG. We took his advice about a pedestrian/bike bridge because, in part, ODOT is a major funder of the bridge.

William Ross: The CTF had forwarded recommendations to the PAG prior to your meeting, some of which were specific. We did not consider a separate bike/ped bridge and did not hear back that PAG or ODOT wanted those alternatives included.

CTF discounted some of those options, and communicated that to the PAG. Later, these options were put back on the table.

Maria: Some were new to me, too, but I have to listen to those folks, most of whom sit on JPACT and will be making funding decisions. We can discuss how the PAG and CTF can communicate better.

Barbara Barber: Thanks, Maria, for coming to more of the CTF meetings than other PAG members, and being the only PAG member to come to this meeting. I am less upset that all our recommendations were not taken, and more upset that new options or options that had been discarded reappeared, such as the bike/ped bridge. The CTF did not know that was an option. The same applies to the westside intersection. We thought we had agreed on intersection options. It feels like the CTF and PAG are operating in two parallel universes. We would like to know the thinking behind the PAG decisions.

Each PAG member has a staff member who is supposed to advise them. PAG members have been briefed on CTF activities.

Commissioner: Some PAG members also bring own thoughts/ideas to the table. We assume they are well briefed.

Every staff member is good about briefing their representatives, but PAG members have their own opinions.

One important elements of the process that was by design is to insulate the CTF to some degree so members could represent the community point of view without too many outside pressures.

Richard Marantz: The PAG putting stuff on the table at the last meeting was a violation of the public process. For example, we had looked at alignments and had extensive public involvement. There is no opportunity at PAG meetings for public comment. Some of these new additions have impacts on constituencies who have not had the chance to respond or evaluate these options, including the trumpet interchange. This is not a very transparent process.

Lidwein Rahman: The CTF and PAG agreed to project milestones, decision-making points. We need to acknowledge when we deviate from that process. I would like a standing agenda item that is a report between the two groups. The original project calendar called for CTF meetings through May of 2008. I am getting tired of process and feel that a lot of that time was wasted when the PAG did not accept our recommendations.

Commissioner: Your recommendations were not ignored. The PAG accepted almost all of them. We know the sacrifice that all of you have made.

Richard: The additions were more upsetting to CTF members than the options that were rejected.

The range of options that the PAG agreed to look at does not match the CTF recommendations. The trumpet and bike/ped bridge were not included in the list of options the CTF considered or were presented at the public meetings or in the online survey. There was an inclusive and transparent process between the CTF and public, but these options were not a part of that process.

Laura Jackson: At the PAG meeting, the table manners of PAG members was most interesting to me. The original screening criteria were disregarded, including the integration of bikes and vehicle traffic. Its not what happened that is most upsetting, but how it happened.

Jason Barbour: There is public concern that the outcome of this process had been orchestrated. Some members of the public voiced concerns here that were not taken into account. There was a lot of conversation about the interchanges earlier in the process. Also, the presentation of bridge interchanges and alignments at the September meeting was confusing.

Commissioner: I will forward your concerns to the whole PAG and ask whether they are interested in meeting and/or how they want to communicate with this group.

Tina Nunez: I agree that the PAG should come to a CTF meeting.

If there is a joint meeting, it should be before next decision process.

Barbara: I would like to talk to PAG members other than Maria.

Commissioner: The CTF was supposed to bring community input to PAG. You have done that by sending representatives to our meeting

Bill Dickey: I remember advising CTF members early in this process to talk directly to PAG members, because there was no guarantee that the PAG would accept CTF recommendations.

John Fyre: Staff have no control over either process. The PAG is one of the decision-making bodies.

Commissioner: There are multiple levels of decision-making and no guarantee that they will take the PAG point of view. Thanks for having me here with you tonight.

Public Comments

Doug Allen said that at last January's PAG meeting, the issue of a bike/ped bridge was raised and staff was directed to report back. This is on the meeting notes on the project website. The option was not brand new, which the CTF should be aware of.

Diana Richardson distributed a handout to CTF members, urging them to think about the current alignment and prefabrication.

Tom Walsh said that the bridge design should be the as simple as possible so that the landscape is left undisturbed and in its natural state. Lighting should be minimal, and only what is needed for safety. Also, the bridge should not be very decorative. He added that some of the selected cross-sections do not seem to make sense and should be explained better. Motor vehicles should fund the entire cost.

Progress on Local Funding

Ian Cannon updated the CTF on discussions on local funding options for the bridge. The County transportation program is funded primarily through gas taxes. The County receives a share of the state gas tax as well as revenues from a three-cent county gas tax. The state tax has not increased since 1993 and the County tax has been the same since the late 1980's. Each county's share of the state gas tax counties receive is based on vehicle registration. Since Washington and Clackamas Counties are growing faster than Multnomah County, our slice of the pie is getting smaller. Construction costs also are up significantly since 1993. Annual expenses will exceed revenue in 2008 or 2009 if no new funding is identified.

Commissioners Ted Wheeler and Rojo de Steffey asked staff to examine the issue. City Commissioner Adams has been working on city transportation funding options. The County wants to move quickly, by the end of 2009, due to the timing of reauthorization for federal transportation funds. The federal government wants County funding to be one third or more of the total cost of a new bridge, or at least \$100 million.

In a recent poll of 600 respondents, half of whom live in cities in Multnomah County, there was general support for some form of transportation revenue increase. Options include a passenger vehicle registration fee increase or bond funded by an additional property tax. The preference expressed by those polled was for a registration fee increase. While some favor it as a user fee, others say it is unfair felt that was unfair since there are other users of the bridge, such as truckers, pedestrians and bicyclists who do not pay vehicle registration fees.

The poll also asked people what kind of transportation projects residents they are likely to support. Intersection improvements outside of cities scored from the high 50 to low 60% range. Multnomah County bridge projects were favored by about 10% more people. Support for funding the Sellwood Bridge was in the 80% range.

Oregon law allows counties to increase their passenger vehicle registration fees up to \$27 per vehicle per year. The county has to share 40% of that with the cities unless they negotiate otherwise. Other jurisdictions in Multnomah County that would have to buy in

are Tri-Met, Washington and Clackamas Counties, whose small portions are in Multnomah County.

These are among the options for increased registration fees.

- Fund Sellwood Bridge only: \$15/year
- Sellwood and other Willamette River bridges: \$21/year
- All County bridges: \$24/year
- All bridges and roads: \$26.

Ken Love: At the last meeting I attended with Commissioner Adams, it was suggested that a \$27 increase in registration fees would take care of county bridges.

The City is looking at a \$4.50 fee per residence and a three cent gas tax.

The County Board is trying to decide how to move forward. This issue may appear on the May 2008 ballot.

Tina: Will this be discussed at the open house?

Bill: Will the different fees in different counties be put out to a vote?

Sharon Wood Wortman: If the County board decides on an alternative to put out to a vote, I am concerned that the Sellwood Bridge gets all the funding and no other bridge gets attention.

There will be public meetings to get community input before the issue is put to a vote.

Dorothy Gage: A \$27 increase would double the fee.

Richard: What are other funding sources if the County comes up with \$100 million?

There are many other major infrastructure projects to compete with, including the Columbia River Crossing. It will be very important to get the County's request to the federal government early.

Jason: Will the County really wait until March to put something on the ballot for a May election?

March is the latest it can go on the ballot. Some public process is needed beforehand.

Response to CTF Inquiries

A revised project schedule has been developed and will be sent to the CTF.

The December 3rd CTF meeting on bridge types will be followed by a December 10th PAG meeting to vote on this issue. The two groups will then have a hiatus while the consultants prepare the draft EIS. We plan to update the committees in Spring/Summer of 2008. The preferred alternative will be chosen in Summer/Fall of 2008. CTF will make its recommendation to the PAG. The decision will ultimately have to be approved by the Portland City Council, JPACT, and the County Commission.

CH2Mhill has designed bike/ped access to Highway 43 for each alternative and vehicular access for all except the trumpet interchange. The engineers and project managers are working with ODOT and others regarding access issues to Staff Jennings and the cemetery. There are many constraints, including topography. If all the designs are not ready by December 3rd, the CTF can elect to have another meeting.

Richard: Is there any indication from ODOT on its willingness to accept our access recommendations?

They are in discussion right now.

Discussion with Bridge Type Working Group

David Goodyear of L.Y.Lin consultants reviewed each alternative bridge types that the Bridge Type Working Group (BTWG) evaluated. He added an image of a cable-stayed bridge with one tower to the illustrations shown to the CTF at the last meeting. The pierless cable-stayed is cost-prohibitive.

Two bridge types are amenable to an underdeck bike/ped pathway—cable-stayed and through arch. The bike/ped bridge can have a lighter, longer span, which is suited to the through-arch, stress ribbon and suspension bridge types.

Bill: How much extra will this additional bridge cost?

Richard: Do we have cost differentials between the three?

We don't have this information yet. The goal is to choose moderate and more expensive bridge type to evaluate since at this stage. The bike/ped bridge cost will be integrated into the Alternative A (rehabilitation).

Each BTWG member scored the bridge type by attribute. In general, the group prefers lighter, cable-supported structures in general.

The highest-scoring bridge types for each alternative are:

- Alt A: Suspension and stress ribbon or delta frame (bike-ped only)
- Alt C: Cable-stayed
- Alt D: Delta, deck arch
- Alt E: Cable-stayed, delta

Sharon, one of the CTF members on the BTWG, introduced working group members Paddy Tillett from ZGF and Bruce Johnson of ODOT who are BTWG members. The BTWG has had three meetings so far.

Paddy explained that he and other BTWG members are professionals who work with bridges but are not involved with the Sellwood bridge specifically. They compared the bridge types based on a set of attributes with respect to cost differentials. Relative order of magnitude costs were considered based on recent experience.

More unique bridge types are typically more expansive. For a span with a minimal number of piers, the box girder tends to do best. It and delta frame are two most economical types, followed by the deck arch.

Bruce explained that from the ODOT perspective, bridge maintenance is a major consideration. Box or deck arch types are easier and less costly to inspect and maintain. Cable-type structures tend to cost more. The scoring criteria included one for inspections and maintenance. Cable-type structures take more expertise to maintain which can add cost. The BTWG reviewed life-cycle maintenance costs in addition to capital costs.

Scott Thayer (the second CTF members on the BTWG): it is difficult to choose a bridge type without a design. It is important to recognize the difference between type and design.

Sharon: Some criteria were combined in a way that was not necessarily useful, such as historic reference and user safety.

There will be more examples of bridge design at the public meeting.

Richard: The bike/ped bridge renderings should show what the railing really needs to look like. Alternative A was put on the table by the PAG as a potential lower cost solution. Keep this bridge's costs low and show it as an example.

The intention is to have an economical version and more expensive/better-looking bridge. The purpose of the exercise is to see how much improvements add to cost.

There is a public survey online right now where people can choose which bridge type looks best for each alternative. Open house exercises are likely to be similar.

The CTF will recommend options to PAG. The BTWG will not recommend the cheapest possible bridge. As bridge professionals, we place value on things other than cost.

It is more difficult to get maintenance funds than capital construction costs.

Barbara: Does the online survey address nuances of cost beyond moderate and more expensive?

The primary purpose is to get input on aesthetics. The survey presents higher priced and moderate priced alternatives.

William: Who would maintain the bike/ped bridge?
The County would most likely own it.

At the December meeting, the CTF has to make recommendations to the PAG.

Bill: The box girder looks pretty good for an affordable option.

Paddy said the working group set out criteria to make views more objective. Box girder has more piers in the river than other options.

Richard: There are not more piers in this illustration. The box girder is not bad visually and should be left on the table if it is lower-cost.

Tina: It is heavy-looking. I would prefer a lighter bridge.

Laura: Are the piers in the renderings what would actually be on the Sellwood Bridge?

Not necessarily; what is shown is a logical number.

Laura: Water sports groups do not want a second bridge. We also want to minimize piers on the main bridge. Low-cost bridges could save money for aesthetic improvements after construction.

The streetscape of the bridge is not shown in these examples.

Sharon: Consider two perspectives--looking at the river and the view from the bridge. The box girder and delta frame don't offer a bridge structure above deck.

Bruce asked the group to think of the Newport Bay bridge. The bridge is almost a destination, but it could be less conspicuous and not distract from the bay itself. The St. John's Bridge is an example of the opposite effect.

Deck-type bridges can have treatments added on at relatively low costs. There are mixed points of view on sturdiness/lightness.

Scott: Consider a possible gateway treatment and historical context. The variety of bridges in the city is also a consideration.

Jason: Could elements of the existing Sellwood bridge design be integrated into the new bridge?

Yes, although scale is an issue.

The uniqueness of this bridge as it relates to the other Portland bridges is also an issue to consider. Some bridge elements are represented in other County bridges. A Caruthers Street Bridge also is being planned at this time. The box girder type was abandoned for that bridge due to navigation clearance requirements. The CTF may also want to consider that bridge type decision, although it probably won't be known until later in our process.

Barbara: I like the cable-stayed.

A single-support cable-stayed bridge would be taller with a shorter span. A double-pylon bridge is likely to be asymmetrical.

The other working group members are Robert Perron, who designed Salmon Street Springs, and Gil Kelly, the City of Portland planning director.

Tina: Could there be a lower deck with a single support?

Paddy: The arch type is best for the lower deck. The delta frame could be very clunky. It would need to be well-designed.

Scott: I prefer a bridge with a superstructure, such as the deck arch. It adds to the sense of a destination bridge.

Laura: Will the BTWG members be at the open house?

They haven't discussed that yet.

The open house is still being planned. It will be held at Oak's Park. A short presentation will be given three times with an open house with displays. The online survey will close one to two days after open house.

The next CTF meeting is December 3rd.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:30.