

## Public Open House – Alternatives Selection

---

DATE: July 25, 2007  
TIME: 6:00 TO 9:00 P.M.  
LOCATION: Sellwood Middle School



The third public forum for the Sellwood Bridge project (a public open house) was held on Wednesday, July 25, 2007 from 6:00 to 9:00 p.m. at the Sellwood Middle School. The meeting was structured to encourage community members to visit a variety of informational stations staffed by members of the project team, as well as a short project presentation and Q&A led by Mike Pullen of Multnomah County.

243 people signed in for the meeting, which had been publicized through a mass mailing to 23,000 households in the project vicinity. The open house was also announced through the local media, including newspapers, radio, and television news.

The purpose of the open house was to review the concept development and alternatives screening process and obtain public preferences on the alignment, cross-section and interchange alternatives being carried forward. The meeting was staffed by members of the consulting team and staff members with Multnomah County, Metro, PDOT and ODOT – many of whom wore bright blue t-shirts to be identified easily in the large crowd.

Meeting participants were welcomed at a sign-in table by project staff, and were greeted with an artistic slideshow presentation projected on a screen highlighting a variety of community comments and concerns heard to date. As community members signed in they were encouraged to attend one of the 4 project presentations, scheduled to run every 45 minutes, as well as to visit the open house stations, view the displays and interact with project staff. The stations included:

- **Alignment Stations** – Three different station areas with maps and displays showing Rehabilitation options, Replacement options and a Combination option

(Rehabilitation of the existing bridge for bike/pedestrians only and a new bridge for vehicles).

- **Process Station** -Providing a discussion of the project background, schedule and decision-making process.
- **Interchange Types Station** - Showing the two recommended west end interchange concepts.
- **Build A Bridge** - An interactive station with overhead projector and individual laptop terminals connected to the "Build A Bridge" tool that allowed workshop participants an opportunity to create and compare complete bridge alternatives based on personal preferences for alignment, cross section and west end interchange type.
- **Tacoma Street Issues** - Staffed by PDOT officials, this station provided a place for meeting participants to discuss issues and concerns associated with Tacoma and other Sellwood streets outside of the project's study area.

Flip charts were located at every station and meeting participants and staff members were encouraged to record comments and questions.

### **Open House Overview**

As with the last two public forums, the open house drew heavily from the Sellwood community. 66% of meeting participants signed in with a 97202 mailing address, so the input received largely reflected local neighborhood issues and concerns.

Participants seemed to appreciate the meeting format, which allowed for group questions and answers as well as one-on-one interaction with project staff. Most people attended the orientation presentation before viewing the displays in the gym. The Build A Bridge tool was experienced by many of the participants.

Top issues of concern were that the Community Task Force did not accurately represent the neighborhood, especially impacted property owners. Participants also expressed a concern that Sellwood residents were not given enough weight, or representation in terms of influencing project decisions. The top misperceptions heard by staff include the idea that federal funding will not support a 2-lane bridge option, that all bridge decisions should be made by local Sellwood residents (or that the bridge is a neighborhood facility only and should not serve regional traffic also), and that the County has already selected a preferred alternative.

## **Orientation Presentation**

The project presentation was led by Mike Pullen with Multnomah County Public Affairs, with the assistance of Marcy Schwartz (Consulting Team Manager, CH2M HILL) and Alex Cousins (facilitator with JLA). The presentation included a 30 minute PowerPoint slideshow which focused primarily on the alternatives screening process and alignments, interchange concepts, and cross-section alternatives being

recommended for further study. Mike Pullen walked the audience through a brief introduction to the project---describing, and reminding the group of the project's purpose, role of the Community Task Force and process of selecting evaluation criteria. Time was left at the end for an interactive question and answer session between workshop participants and project staff.

The following general themes were raised during the Q&A sessions:

- Concerns about the weighting accorded various measures in the evaluation criteria (and allowing Sellwood residents/issues more "weight" in the decision making process)
- Specific concerns about the weighting accorded to residential relocations
- Questions about the plan for residential relocation compensation
- Concerns about the make-up and representation on the Community Task Force
- Concerns about commuter traffic and Sellwood neighborhood livability and this project's possible effect on each
- Belief that a new bridge should be built in Clackamas County instead of or in addition to Sellwood
- Questions about traffic impact during construction
- Questions about how this process is different from previous planning efforts

## Stations Summary

Flip charts were set up at all project stations so that participants could jot down comments or questions. Comments are reflected in the following general themes. A complete list of flip char comments can be found in the appendix.

### Alignment Stations

- Objections to teal alignment impact on Sellwood River Front Park
- Support of the teal alignment due to the fact that it minimizes housing and business impacts (also allows for a 4-lane bridge with bike and pedestrian paths)
- Concerns regarding Teal and Pink alignment impacts on historic Sellwood Church
- Construction concerns including impact to local businesses, issues with the cost of construction, noise, and environmental impacts, as well as alignments' ability to serve future traffic demand
- Request to see the CS3 process (Context sensitive and sustainable solutions) used in design and construction of selected alignment
- Desire to see rehabilitation of the Sellwood bridge for historic attraction value, but also to conform to current safety standards while allowing for future transit options
- Desire to see transit options increased or re-instated in all alternatives
- Concern that the "I" cross section could result in safety concerns and attract vagrants

## Process Station

- Concerns that local property owners/business owners are not represented on the Community Task Force
- Concern that Sellwood residents do not have enough weight in terms of decision making and influence
- Concerns that the Project Need Statement does not include a vision for Portland, or for Oregon
- Suggestion to add/require a sustainability report to the project EIS

## Interchange Types Station

- Preference for a signalized interchange option for safer bike and pedestrian use
- Support of Roundabouts for traffic calming and community aesthetics
- Both interchange options, and connections should be assessed for soil erosion impacts

## Tacoma Street Issues

- Concerns regarding bridge impact to Tacoma Street capacity and Tacoma Street Master plan
- Concerns that the construction of a 4-lane bridge might ruin the community of Sellwood
- Support for increasing the capacity of Sellwood bridge (i.e.: number of lanes, and increased transit options) in order to effectively plan for and accommodate future traffic demand

## Comment Forms Summary

Comment forms were made available to all workshop participants. The comment forms were essentially the same as the interactive survey posted to the project website, asking participants to choose up to two complete bridge alternatives.

Fifty (50) comment forms were turned in to project staff following the meeting. Complete analysis of the results is included as an appendix to this report.

66% of the completed forms came from people living within the 97202 zip code (See Figure 1.1). The majority of respondents (24%) stated that they primarily used the bridge to commute to work, while 16% stated that they used the bridge primarily for recreational

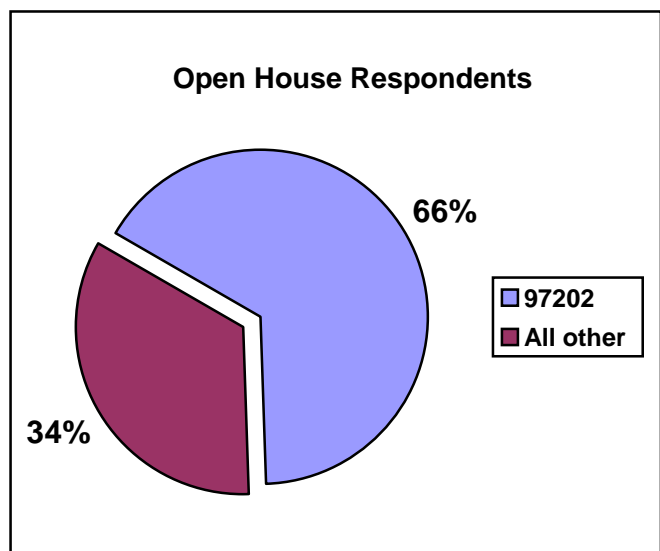


Figure 1.1: Open House Respondents

opportunities, and another 16% relating to business reasons. 83.7% of respondents crossed the bridge in a personal vehicle, 22% on bike and 12% crossed on foot.

68% of all respondents indicated that they had used the project's "Build a Bridge" program during the meeting before recording their responses.

Out of the 50 comment forms received, 23 respondents (45%) selected Replacement as their number one choice for bridge construction. 18 respondents (35%) chose Rehabilitation and 10 respondents (19%) chose Combination.

### **Replacement**

60% of respondents that selected a Replacement alternative as their top choice indicated that they favored a signalized interchange. 37% selected the yellow center alignment, and 27% selected the teal alignment as their favorite alignment option. Both cross sections A and K (53" and 57") were selected by 20% of the survey respondents.

Respondents indicated that residential relocation and impact to surrounding natural environment both played a large role in determining which alignment to select.

### **Rehabilitation**

For those that selected the Rehabilitation option, 63% favored a roundabout interchange option with a 31" cross section (I). Approximately 80% of respondents indicated that they did not want a temporary bridge, and 56% selected "No" in reference to a seismic II upgrade.

Respondents that selected this alternative cited that they did so because of the fact that a yellow rehabilitation alignment would minimize impacts to surrounding neighbors, parks, bike trails, and overall community quality of life.

### **Combination**

Fifty-three percent (53%) of respondents favoring the combination alternative cited the teal alignment with a (M) cross section as the preferred alternative. Approximately 27% selected a purple alignment with the same 2 lane cross section.

### **Open Ended Responses**

The following themes were included in the open-ended responses:

- Making any new bridge a good fit for Sellwood
- Concerns about traffic impacts to Tacoma Street and maintaining two lanes
- Spending the money to develop a viable long-term bridge solution
- Praise for the open public process
- Concerns about negative impacts and financial losses for residential neighbors of the bridge
- Paying for the bridge with tolls – discounts for locals and higher tolls for out of county commuters
- Safety for cyclists and pedestrians