

Summary – CAG #14/PDT#13

Community Advisory Group / Project Development Team I-5 Willamette River Bridge Project

October 14, 2008, 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

McLane Conference Room, Springfield ODOT Offices (644 A Street)

ATTENDANCE

CAG Members

- Charlotte Behm – Representative, Springfield Neighborhood (and member, CPC for Whilamut Natural Area)
- Eric Gunderson – Former President, American Institute of Architects SWO Chapter
- Adam Gutierrez – Springfield Chamber of Commerce
- Bob Kline – Chair, Harlow Neighbors
- Phillip Richardson – Eugene Parks and Open Space Division
- David Sonnichsen – CPC for Whilamut Natural Area
- Scott Wylie – Springfield Resident

Resource Team

- Dick Upton – ODOT Project Manager, Bridge Delivery Unit
- Tim Dodson - ODOT
- Jamie Damon – Public Involvement Manager, JLA
- Kalin Schmoltdt – Public Involvement Coordinator, JLA
- Joe Harwood – ODOT, Public Information Officer

Handouts (emailed ahead of time):

- Agenda
- DRAFT CAG meeting summary #13
- FINAL CAG meeting summary #12
- FINAL PDT meeting summary #9
- FINAL PDT meeting summary #10
- DRAFT Bridge View meeting summary

PDT Members

- Don Angermayer – ODOT District 5 Program Coordinator
- Molly Cary – ODOT Region 2, Environmental Manager
- Sonny Chickering – ODOT Region 2, Area 5 Manager
- Chris Henry – City of Eugene, Transportation Planning Engineer
- Al Heyn – ODOT Region 2, Senior Bridge Engineer
- Kent Howe – Lane County, Planning Director
- Greg Mott – City of Springfield, Community Planning Manager
- Ann Sanders – ODOT, Project Lead

Other Attendees

- Douglas Beauchamp – Lane Arts Council
- Charles Biggs – CPC for Whilamut Natural Area (CAG Alternate)
- John Ferguson – T.Y. Lin
- Larry Fox – OBEC
- Larry Gescher – Slayden
- Linda Riley – OBDP
- Jyll Smith – ODOT
- Tom Lauer – ODOT
- Billie O’Conner – OBDP
- Kevin Parrish – Hamilton

WELCOME AND AGENDA REVIEW

Jamie explained that the purpose of the meeting was to hear from Tom Lauer regarding the steps leading to the bridge type decision, to begin considering the “basket” of aesthetic elements, and to begin the design discussion. The groups will return to holding separate CAG and PDT meetings after this joint meeting.

Jamie led introductions for the joint committees. New attendees included Douglas Beauchamp from the Lane Arts Council who will be working with the design team on involving local artists, and Adam Gutierrez, who will represent the Springfield Chamber of Commerce on the CAG. Dick Upton was introduced as the new project manager who will replace Tim Dodson.

COMMITTEE BUSINESS

Summary of Meeting #13 – There were no comments.

INFORMATION LEADING TO THE BRIDGE TYPE DECISION

Tom Lauer thanked Tim for his work on the project and welcomed Dick Upton, who is a returning ODOT employee and former Area 5 manager. Tom also thanked the CAG and PDT members on behalf of ODOT for their commitment to the project. Tom explained that he manages the ODOT Major Projects Branch and is currently working on the statewide OTIA III bridge program.

Budget – The budget for the OTIA III program is roughly \$1.3 billion as distributed over eight years and the Willamette River Bridge is the largest project in the program. Two years ago, the program budget had a reserve of around \$80-90 million. The program has managed to stay roughly on budget although inflation has increased 35% since 2003 and the initial budget for the WRB Project has been raised from \$70 million to \$150 million. The WRB and other projects have eaten into the program reserve and currently, the program is about \$1.5 million over budget and new costs continue to emerge. Many costs are market dependent and vary based on oil prices and commodity markets (such as steel and concrete). Aggressive bidding is planned for the spring which should allow the program to end on budget. While the OTIA program has thus far been responsive to the needs of the WRB Project, additional funding is no longer available and it will be necessary to hold to the allotted \$150 million budget.

Schedule – Inflation poses an ongoing challenging to all projects. Tom said that he has challenged the design and project team to be working in water by next summer so as to avoid missing a work period and the corresponding effects of inflation over the extra year. The contract structure places the cost risk on the agency, as price negotiations have not yet occurred with Hamilton and Slayden. Tim noted that delaying the project to seek more funding over the next year could add \$10 million in inflated costs to the additional \$15 million needed to build a through arch bridge.

Program constraints – Tom explained that initial costs in August seemed to support a deck arch bridge, however new numbers came through after the August PDT meeting that seemed to indicate that a through arch was within budget. After those estimates were reevaluated, the three span through arch came in at \$171 million, the two span through arch came in around \$162 million, and the deck arch came in at around \$153 million. The team felt that design exceptions could be approved so as to bring the deck arch under budget. Based on feedback from the team and time constraints, it became necessary to select the deck arch type and move forward.

Scott Wylie said that he was aware of how much prices can fluctuate between design and construction, though the cost change seemed to take ODOT completely off guard and the type selection seemed sudden. Tom acknowledged that costs should have been revisited more frequently given the expensive structure and the context of a rapidly changing market.

David Sonnichsen noted that a project information paper from 2007 had indicated a project budget of \$180 million, and he asked why the budget appears to have been lowered to \$150 million. Tom explained that the \$150 million figure includes only on-ground construction costs and does not include \$30 million for elements such as preliminary construction, engineering work, and inspections. Sonny Chickering added that local agencies often speak in terms of construction costs only, whereas ODOT also includes other costs such as design work and inspections. Chris Henry commented that the apparent inconsistency demonstrates a lack of continuity of message to the community.

Chris said that while he felt the explanations for the decision were rational and would likely have been accepted by the committees, the decision itself did not seem respectful of the process. He described a distinct lack of engagement after the new information became known and cited the various editorials and letters to the editor expressing the community's disappointment. Tom apologized on behalf of the agency, noting that no disrespect was intended. He agreed that the agency did not reach out and explain itself well. He noted that while the selected type may not have been ideal, the agency had considered the community's concerns even if it communicated that understanding poorly.

Bob Kline noted the importance of the final look of the bridge and he asked how much of the budget would be designated towards making the bridge unique. Tom described the design challenge in terms of finding an overall character for the bridge that goes beyond the arches and superficial elements. He said that style would come from building consistently within a desired character. Jamie noted that the CAG had placed great importance on the commitment from ODOT towards bridge aesthetics. Tom said that the commitment from the team is clear and that the budget was free to move any way needed to build the facility. He acknowledged the challenge of applying above deck structures to the deck arch bridge type.

Eric Gunderson said that he was surprised at the last minute removal of the through arch type because the process leading up to the type selection was so well done. He asked how costs could be monitored from this point forward in order to protect important design elements. Tom explained that the team had conceived of \$7-8 million in potential design exceptions. While exact adherence to design standards can increase cost, design exceptions can employ other ways to safely mitigate those expenses. He reiterated that the A&E and CM/GC firms would seek to incorporate the design within the whole structure, and design elements would not just be superficial. Larry Gescher noted that the CM/GC would start to provide ongoing cost estimates and it would be in the interest of the firm to make sure that the team stays within the budget. Larry Fox said that the team working on the preliminary engineering did not have the benefit of a topographic survey model and the impacts of the vertical grade were unknown. He noted that the costly elements emerged more because of the roadway components and not the bridge itself. He acknowledged the lapse in communicating the reasons to the committees, but noted that the current data is better and reveals more solid cost saving opportunities than before. John Fergusson noted that because different contractors use different methods, the cost estimates to date have been developed based on averages. He said that in-depth conversations about costs are yet to come and savings are still possible.

Tom cited the “bolt-on” form-liner treatments being used to satisfy the Columbia River Gorge Scenic Area design guidelines and he challenged the team to use an embedded aesthetic for the facility instead of superficial elements. Tom invited the committees to come to the project offices in Salem to stay informed of the project development, and he cautioned against letting the increased speed of the project leave people behind. Dick said he would prevent that from happening.

Kent Howe said the Board of County Commissioners was disappointed with the type choice. They were hoping for a legacy design that would serve as a symbol and use the through arch type. He also acknowledged that current economic conditions make additional federal funding unlikely.

Greg Mott said that he felt that the process had felt unique and empowering to the involved groups and created a sense that the bridge belonged to the community. The committees appeared as active clients of ODOT, and the City Council had been told that the committees would be responsible for the design recommendations. Greg said that while he recognized the cost increase, he had expected that the committees would be informed of the circumstances and allowed to reach a conclusion on their own. Instead, the groups were excluded when they were almost at the end of the process and simply told of the final decision. The Springfield elected officials were also disappointed with the decision. Greg requested that the commitment to an integrated theme or aesthetic treatments be solidified in writing so that aesthetics would not be easily sacrificed.

Scott Wylie agreed that the process seemed to have gone well despite the final decision. He encouraged that the process be continued in the future and applied to other projects. He encouraged looking at both design as art and art in the design to increase the possibilities for how the bridge can become a “signature” bridge.

Charlotte Behm cautioned against ignoring input from the community and she said that she was aware of design decisions concerning the park that were being made without community feedback. Charlotte asked who the committee should contact if they feel that the project is bypassing the committees or the public. Dick encouraged the committees to contact him if something doesn’t feel right. Dick also offered to speak with Charlotte regarding her concerns. Tom Lauer said that he would hear concerns from Dick and try to help ensure that dialogue is happening.

Dick explained more about himself. He had worked for ODOT for about 12 years. Dick was drawn back to ODOT based on his work in advancing community partnerships. He said that despite the numerous constraints that ODOT faces (such as budget and schedule,) it was important to seek a signature bridge. He acknowledged the failure of the process in delivering the new information to the CAG and PDT and seeking their feedback in a timely manner. He noted the goal of building a signature bridge within a partnership that doesn’t leave anyone behind. Ann Sanders added that many of the team members live in the area and are invested in the project.

Dick described the need to have enough of the design in place to begin work by next summer. Larry Fox noted that the A&E and CM/GC firms were charged with on-time delivery, and a summer start date means that permits are needed soon. He noted the need to move forward quickly with the public engagement process in order to meet the schedule as some decisions need to be made in order to qualify for permits. Because of the tight timeline, Larry suggested using some form of online postings to keep the committees apprised of the latest information without slowing the process with additional committee meetings.

Scott Wylie asked about visits to the Salem office. Dick said that Billy O'Conner from OBDP would be onsite at 1500 SE Liberty on a daily basis. Larry Fox encouraged people to call ahead in order to make sure people are around, though Tom Lauer also encouraged people to drop in if they happened to be in the area. Linda Riley said that rides could be made available from the train station.

Jamie noted that Tim's primary goal for the project involved building better relationships with the community and she encouraged the committee members to remain involved in the process.

DESIGN DISCUSSION

Larry Fox reiterated the role of the A&E firm and summarized the design process to date. Since the decision to move forward on the deck arch type, some design exceptions have been approved and costs are coming down somewhat. Typically, at 30% of design, a Design Acceptance Package (DAP) is intended to set the project footprint and launch permitting efforts. The team is interacting with permitting agencies on a weekly basis in order to modify the design and satisfy the requirements of the various permits. 100% design will not be necessary by June 1, and many of the aesthetic elements do not need to be decided before permitting occurs, but some elements of the design need to be set in order to move forward with the permitting process.

The Draft DAP document was produced at the end of September for ODOT review and a final version should be available at the end of October. Progress Plans will be needed by late November or early December, with Final Plans due in mid-August 2009. It will be possible to change some features through mid-June 2009, though it is important to meet this schedule to avoid the impacts of inflation. Larry noted that it will be easier to get consensus on art that is integrated into the overall style of the structure as opposed to appliqué treatments.

Chris Henry asked what design elements have already been decided at 30% of design. Larry Fox explained that the design of the arch is heavily influenced by the loads it must support, constraints from the rise from the river to the road surface, and the location of the piers in the river. Two arch ribs per bridge are being considered. Larry suggested that it would be a good time to update the rendering of the deck arch bridge and show to the group. The primary difference is that the latest designs use longer spans.

Bob Kline asked whether it would be possible to make the new design information accessible as it becomes available so people can review the design process more closely. Tom Lauer noted that the aesthetic to be incorporated into the fundamental design needs to be found now and can't wait for monthly meetings. Dick said that a method of committee engagement needs to be established. Jamie suggested an online feedback mechanism. Scott Wylie urged that such a feedback mechanism should provide a way to include visuals as well.

Larry Fox noted that there would need to be a system in place for addressing committee feedback, but agreed that it would be helpful to use such a system to address certain issues. He noted the question of how to integrate the arch spandrels over the river with the pier configuration next to Franklin as one example. He added that small changes to design, such as column size, don't often affect price and are important if desired by the community. He noted that they were still trying to define the timeline and relevant input points.

Linda Riley noted that the design team would need to be clear about which elements are inflexible, such as vertical clearances and pier locations.

Ann Sanders noted previous renderings that depicted arches of different bulk and asked whether the heftiness of the arches were set. Larry Fox said that they would prefer not to revisit the arch size and that the preferred size is generally reflected in the rendering. He explained that they have been proceeding so as to design an efficient, un-busy, and slender structure. To that end, they have tried to minimize the amount of concrete and rebar in the design.

Charlotte Behm and other committee members asked how future decisions will be reached, citing the lack of connection with the committee on the previous decisions. Jamie noted that further calibration needs to happen between the A&E firm and the committees and she suggested holding an additional meeting on Oct. 30. Larry offered to use the additional meeting to explain the constraints that led to the design decisions to date, what design issues are inflexible, what decisions remain, and what mechanisms can be used to help inform those decisions. Bob Kline expressed interest in issues such as how bike paths can influence pier location.

John Ferguson explained that while some design decisions pertaining to the structural system need to be made sooner, other design elements are more flexible. Pylons, for instance, are almost standalone elements that could be built at any time. Pylons would be located at the four corners of the bridge and could be quite large and detailed. John noted an example where T.Y. Lin sponsored a pylon design contest and high school students used local themes to create pylon concepts. The example pylons cost roughly \$5,000 apiece, though more intricate designs could cost more. The only constraint is that pylons would have to be located behind the guardrail.

Elements such as slope paving, abutments and retaining walls can be very basic or sculptural, and can add \$10-\$80 in additional cost per square foot. Texture effects can be achieved more cheaply by using form-liner. Custom designs are more expensive and take longer, while repetitive designs can also influence cost and timing. Slope paving decisions will come later in the process.

Because some retaining walls will be built sooner than others, a decision must be made about whether to use consistent themes. If a consistent theme is used, it will need to be decided sooner. If a variety of themes are appropriate, the decision points could be staggered. John suggested that a decision on a consistent wall theme may need to be decided by Jan. 2009, though Larry Fox said that the timing could vary based on internal conversations. Linda Riley noted that the team must consider what makes sense to advance early and needs the committee to be flexible.

John explained that the team needs help choosing the context and the theme in order to structure the conversation about specific design elements and possible treatments.

Chris Henry noted the opportunities for adding rustication to the arch forms.

Linda Riley asked whether the broader community would be involved in the design decision or whether it would be left to the committees. Jamie said that different approaches are possible and that a first step would be to decide a theme at the Oct. 30 meeting. That meeting would clarify how to involve input from other groups like the Lane Arts Council and the AIA.

Greg Hyde encouraged careful consideration of the land use approval process with regard to elements such as slope paving, retaining walls, and path layout, as that information may need to be included in the submittal process. Larry Fox agreed that there is a need to secure which elements can be influenced through input from the public and the committees. He said that they would hopefully know which elements can be left undecided while still meet permitting criteria by the next meeting.

Tim Dodson noted that the sequence of decisions to date has been linear and on schedule. The issues at hand have not been put off or ignored, though the process itself is moving faster.

Scott Wylie noted that although some elements need to be decided early, those decisions should try not to preclude opportunities to enrich the experience of the bridge or later ideas.

NEXT STEPS

Jamie noted a possible schedule for the Oct. 30 meeting:

- Discuss the “fixed” design considerations and why those decisions were made
- Focus on immediate design needs – such as theme and structural considerations
- Discuss who to engage and how to engage them
- Outline the critical path for the design and when input points should be

Jamie suggested that it may be necessary to combine the CAG and PDT meetings because of the tight timeframe. Charlotte suggested that the process would be easier with a smaller group and that some members may not be interested in participating in the design process from this point on. Dick suggested that sub-groups could be formed once there is more clarity on moving forward. Scott cautioned against over formalizing the group and encouraged that people should be able to participate broadly. Jamie said that the team had been considering focusing on different design “zones” that would be relevant to different design areas and which would call upon different levels of expertise. Those possibilities will be better clarified once the critical path is known.

Scott suggested thinking of the “realm” of artistic opportunity for the bridge that includes the experience before reaching the bridge and areas beyond it.

Tim Dodson asked John Ferguson to briefly address costs for lighting and rail treatments. John said that the cost range depends on the features. Lighting can add millions to a project and decorative rails can add \$50-\$300 per foot to initial costs. Conversations with the CM/GC regarding what is easiest for them to build will affect the final price.

Scott Wylie reminded the team to address what is permissible within the highway right of way so that the group won't spend time addressing infeasible designs.

ADDITIONAL WHITEBOARD/FLIPCHART NOTES

“Fixed” Considerations for Design

- Pier locations
- Vertical clearance
- What is permissible to do in R.O.W.

Moving Forward:

- Bring significant new information to project partners to discuss prior to decision-making
- Regular budget updates to CAG/PDT
- Continued demonstrated commitment to aesthetic elements from ODOT/contractors
- Be aware of pace moving forward – moving quickly from here on out, don’t leave CAG/PDT community behind

Ongoing Communication:

- 1st call **Dick Upton** at (503) 705-1307 (cell)
Richard.Upton@odot.state.or.us
- 2nd call **Tom Lauer** (503) 986-4412
Thomas.J.Lauer@odot.state.or.us
- Also call **Ann Sanders** (541) 747-1310
ann.i.sanders@odot.state.or.us
- “Open door” policy at project office in Salem
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