

Summary – Meeting #7

Community Advisory Group – I-5 Willamette River Bridge Project

November 19, 2007, 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

Tykeson Room, Eugene Public Library (100 West 10th Ave.)

ATTENDANCE

CAG Members

- Charlotte Behm – Representative, Springfield Neighborhood (and member, CPC for Whilamut Natural Area)
- David Sonnichsen – Chair, CPC for Whilamut Natural Area
- Pat French – Planner and CPC Representative, Willamalane Park & Recreation District
- Trevor Taylor – Natural Resources Supervisor, Eugene Parks and Open Space Division
- Dave Carvo – Vice Chair, Glenwood Neighborhood Group
- Bob Kline – Chair, Harlow Neighbors
- Chris Ramey – Director and Architect, University Planning Office, University of Oregon

Resource Team

- Ann Sanders – ODOT Project Leader/Area Representative for Lane County, ODOT Region 2
- Tim Dodson – ODOT Project Liaison/CPM, ODOT Bridge Delivery Unit
- Lou Krug – Project Manager, Oregon Bridge Delivery Partners
- James Gregory – Environmental Task Leader, Oregon Bridge Delivery Partners
- Jamie Damon – Public Involvement Coordinator, Jeanne Lawson Associates
- Kalin Schmoldt – Public Involvement Assistant, Jeanne Lawson Associates

Other Attendees

Chris Henry - City of Eugene

Charles Biggs

Gary Rayor – OBEC

Albert L. Golden

Pam Pulliam – OBEC

Bob Silvis

Sonny Chickering

Tom Adams – KVAL

Handouts

- Agenda
- DRAFT Summary of CAG Meeting #6
- FINAL Summary of PDT Meeting #6

WELCOME AND AGENDA REVIEW

Jamie welcomed the group and noted the shorter meeting time. The meeting is intended to focus on the EA and the distribution process, new bridge renderings, the draft newsletter, and how the information will be presented at the January hearings on the EA.

PUBLIC COMMENT

David Sonnichsen requested that visitors introduce themselves and their affiliations:

- Sonny Chickering – Area 5 manager for ODOT.
- Bob Silvis – Consulting engineer, interested in the bridge plans.
- Chris Henry – PDT member.
- Albert Golden – Springfield citizen.
- Gary Rayor – Eugene citizen, OBEC.
- Pam Pulliam – Eugene citizen, OBEC.

COMMITTEE BUSINESS

Summary of CAG and PDT Meeting #6 – David confirmed the accuracy of the dialogue with Chris Henry and Chris Ramey (*page 6,*) regarding the conceptual bridge element of the RFQ. Chris Henry noted the addition of the word “without” to clarify his statement: “... there are ways to demonstrate creativity *without* requiring a bridge design concept.” The summary was approved with this addition.

Tim Dodson noted that the RFQ for the A&E firm did include a request for an 11x17 bridge concept. However, none of the received concepts were any different than the concepts already presented to the public and so there did not appear to be any intellectual property issues. The concerns about requiring the bridge concept expressed by CAG members at the last meeting were shared and discussed with ODOT staff, though the procurement staff felt there wasn't a problem given the context of the RFQ. The DOJ was also satisfied.

PROJECT UPDATE

Progress on the EA – James noted that the EA was under internal review as of the last CAG meeting. Comments on the internal draft were submitted on October 23, and about 330 comments were received. The document has been revised and was presented back to the Project Team. Jim Cox of ODOT is now reviewing the document prior to sending it to FHWA for approval. The process is still on track for a December 18, 2007 release to the public. The EA will be available for public comment until the end of January 2008, assuming release on or around December 18. Comments will then be reviewed and incorporated into the document and a Revised EA will be released for comments. Final approval of the Revised EA is anticipated in mid-June.

Distribution process – Once the EA is approved for public distribution by FHWA it will be sent on CD to the interested parties list along with a letter explaining how to submit comments. Hardcopies will be made available at ODOT, libraries, city halls, and county buildings. Associated news releases and materials advertising the release will also be issued. The public comment period will allow time for the public to review the EA and submit comments. Hearings on the EA will be held in mid-January and allow the public to provide oral testimony. The EA itself will be about 100 pages and include a 10-12 page executive summary as well as several appendices.

Dave Carvo suggested adding the Springfield Utility Board to the distribution list. Bob Kline suggested adding State Representative Nancy Nathanson.

Jamie noted that there would be about one month to refine the mailing list before distribution. Revisions and additions should be sent to Kalin (kschmoldt@jlainvolve.com) by December 7.

Update on A&E Selection – Tim updated the CAG on the progress of the A&E procurement process. Four firms have been recommended for an RFP shortlist. The RFPs will go out on December 7, with proposals due one month later.

David Sonnichsen asked that it be noted that Gary Rayor and Pam Pulliam were OBEC employees. Gary said he was attending the meeting as a private citizen. Tim noted that the shortlisted firms have been prohibited from soliciting members of the project team or the CAG and have to be careful about how they present their connection to the process. He said they are allowed to attend the meetings and to listen.

Lou noted that including the design team early in the process (after A&E selection) will help with the bridge type selection later on.

Charlotte said that she valued the use of local firms. She noted that firms with a local investment demonstrated ownership in the local process during the work on the temporary bridge and were considerate of issues such as neighborhood impacts and truck routes. Jamie noted that Tim was the appropriate person to talk to about the importance of a local presence by the winning team. Tim reminded the group that construction issues will be dealt with by the CM/GC firm.

Bob asked about the process for incorporating architectural features. Jamie explained that the continuing role of the CAG has evolved over the past two meetings. There will likely be several additional meetings of the group as various design aspects emerge. There is also the possibility of bringing on additional CAG members to broaden the group's knowledge base. Jamie suggested mapping the design process in January once proposals are gathered from the A&E firm.

Tim noted the email that Rich Hazel had sent to the group. Rich was concerned that the bridge type selection should not preclude the possibility of incorporating architectural elements. Tim explained that the bridge type selection has to be completed early and the inclusion of architectural elements will take at least a year of design process. He suggested that the project team could develop a package of design elements and look at which bridge types could support them. He agreed that while the project team, PDT and CAG have been working on bridge type for awhile, we have not been discussing the limitations of each type on architectural elements. Tim confirmed that there would be a future meeting to discuss those options. Jamie noted that the PDT meeting at the end of October had debated how much design discussion to have given how little is understood about the tradeoffs associated with the bridge types. Dave Carvo noted that the A&E firm will be able to help provide insight into what can and can't be accomplished based on bridge type. Jamie agreed that it was good to be aware of what is unknown so possibilities are not constrained.

Trevor Taylor asked about the A&E selection process. Tim said that the RFP would be issued in early December, allowing one month for firms to respond. The firms will then be interviewed and scored: 30% on qualifications, 30% on their proposal, and 40% based on the results of the interview. The scoring matrix is currently in development. Dave Carvo asked if the CAG could suggest questions for the interview process. Jamie offered to spend some time on the selection process at the January meeting.

UPDATED BRIDGE RENDERINGS

Lou reminded the group that they began with very conceptual bridge types with the purpose of trying to convey what the bridges could look like in general forms or with some example details.

While it was initially believed that the use of a through-arch was beyond the bridge budget, further consideration has revealed that it might be affordable after all. Lou noted that use of a through-arch was not originally an option for the design firms submitting SOQs.

Lou showed images of the existing conditions from the park, the river, and from Franklin Blvd. He then showed a through-arch rendering. Lou noted that the through-arches are structural and made of steel.

Charles Biggs asked whether the renderings depict two separate bridges. Lou said they did, with two arches each. He noted that a tradeoff for the through-arch structure is that the bridge gets wider because of the above deck elements. The through-arch would require about six additional feet on each side of each bridge.

Lou explained that the team's initial assumptions and analysis regarding the bridge types were more conservative and indicated that a through arch type bridge would not fit within the project cost. Under updated cost assumptions, it is now believed that this type will fit into the overall budget. Lou showed several color variations and noted that edge treatments on the bridge are also possible.

Jamie pointed out that there are different design opportunities for each structure. For example, pier choice would not apply to this bridge type. She explained that they are trying to think of how to talk about the bridge forms and their associated packages. Lou added that the through-arch only works with pier option B and would include a total of four piers in the water.

Lou showed an example of the through arch from the point of view of a driver on I-5. He noted the gap between the bridges and pointed out that it would be narrower because the bridge structures are wider.

Lou noted that the bridges and approach embankments must stay within the existing right of way. Lou explained that the detour bridge uses a temporary easement that stipulates that the fill materials used for the detour bridge must be removed when the permanent replacement bridge is constructed. Because of that condition, there will likely be the need to construct retaining walls to remain within the existing right of way.

Lou showed a bridge concept without structural above deck elements and noted the possibility of using non structural features such as pylons or gateway features to provide visual interest.

Lou showed several variations on the other bridge types. The deck-arch can include variations such as rails or different sized arches. Lou noted that a tradeoff of the deck-arch is that a deck-arch segment cannot be used over Franklin. The box segmental offers a variety of opportunities for colors and rails, and could use a variety of pier forms. The bridge could be squared or rounded, textured, or lit. I-girder bridges can be haunched to create a curve effect. No specific elements are being promoted at this time. Lou noted that some people like the idea of illuminated bridges while others don't. Such questions will be addressed with community input and will be made during final design.

Jamie noted the difficulty inherent in characterizing the different options. Lou asked about the best way to present the variations to the public. He noted that they wanted to present examples of design possibilities as well as tradeoffs. The EA will contain examples that contrast the different bridge type

and pier alternatives with existing conditions, but will not focus on the bridge design. The EA doesn't make any decisions about bridge type, but indicates which types and pier locations satisfy the environmental requirements.

Bob suggested that his wife, a graphic designer, could provide insight into attractive color variations. Jamie said that the release of the EA will launch the design discussion, and hopefully many artists will offer their perspectives.

Chris Ramey suggested that a variety of above deck elements and accessories be shown for the other bridge types as well. Trevor noted that the only option for people who like above deck features options is the through-arch. He agreed that other above deck options need to be presented. Jamie explained that they were attempting to present the options as equally as possible, and offered to acquire some examples of above deck options.

Charlotte cautioned against effectively giving the public only one above deck choice. She also asked that tradeoffs be made clear. For example, a through-arch might mean that more money is spent on the bridge structure, while a simpler bridge would permit more versatility in allowing artistic treatments and local interests to be involved. She said the through-arch doesn't really seem to fit the community, and questioned what could be added to make it look more appropriate to Lane County.

Dave Carvo noted that the through-arch structure could be popular with travel agencies but be a maintenance challenge for ODOT. He noted that maintaining a metal through-arch could cost more than a concrete structure. Trevor noted that adding above deck elements to other options could also add to maintenance needs. Jamie agreed that maintenance is an important element to consider.

DRAFT NEWSLETTER

Jamie explained the challenge of how to present static images of the bridges while still presenting them as equals. Charlotte suggested the need to improve the appearance of the other options. Trevor agreed that the public will be drawn to some options based on the visual and not the analytical. He suggested including some elements on each of the bridge types, possibly including above deck features to make them equal. He also noted that different bridge types may look better with different elements.

Ann suggested that per Bob's suggestion, members of the public could add their own ideas to blank renderings. Jamie noted the possibility of using an online tool to customize bridge design options and of using a web survey that incorporated video and animated design elements for each bridge type. Ann encouraged the inclusion of more direct design ideas from the public as well.

Charlotte said that there is a need to expand the scope of public thinking about the design. She suggested a design that could even show salmon crossing over the river as a design example.

Chris Ramey questioned the language in the newsletter that said "Review and comment on bridge types under consideration." Jamie explained that the language was from the previous newsletter and would be modified. Chris suggested getting the public excited by putting up as many concepts as possible while articulating the message that the final design will include a whole package. Trevor agreed, noting the need to keep the design open with specific artistic details to follow at a later time. He noted that featuring specific artistic elements could turn some people off.

PREPARATION FOR PUBLIC HEARINGS IN JANUARY

Jamie noted that there is likely to be interest in discussing bridge type and design at the upcoming EA hearings. She said that while it would be premature to get ahead of the A&E firm, it would be good to capitalize on any opportunities to get people involved. She asked the CAG for ideas on how to present an apples-to-apples comparison of the bridges for the public while explaining the process and emphasizing that the bridge type selection is just beginning.

Chris Ramey suggested keeping discussions on the EA separate and distinct from the bridge type selection, making it clear that the design elements would be considered later on.

Dave Carvo suggested using black silhouettes to represent the featureless bridge-types for the sake of the hearing. David Sonnichsen countered that they also want to get people excited about the possibilities and to begin to recognize the challenges associated with specific features.

Trevor asked whether the EA addresses any aesthetic issues. James said that the EA does assess visual quality and impacts from several key viewpoints, though it keeps the forms as simple as possible. Trevor noted the importance of conveying a sense of both the possibilities and environmental impacts. Lou said that they would be seeking feedback on the best elements of each option, though there would not be a “vote.” Feedback will be gathered via a questionnaire.

Charlotte noted that given the density and complexity of the EA, few people will have actually read it. She asked how its content can be presented in a pleasing manner. Jamie suggested using a looped PowerPoint presentation that considers the story of what’s happened so far and what’s been heard.

Dave Carvo suggested using a “paper-doll” concept that allows people to mix and match bridge features. Chris Ramey suggested using a felt-board.

Chris Henry noted that the hearing is first and foremost about the EA, and while feedback on the design elements is important, the event is starting to sound like a design charette. He suggested keeping such events distinct. Chris Henry suggested making the distinction clear by putting up a large roadway themed sign that says “Design Charette Ahead”.

A visitor asked how long the new bridge could be expected to last. Tim said it could last 100-125 years.

Tim explained that the EA is intended to identify any significant issues or environmental impacts that could result in the need to prepare an EIS.

James said that the EA compares existing conditions with the build alternatives. He noted that the EA presents a finding that each bridge type option presents an improvement over the existing aesthetic conditions. The EA employs the FHWA visual impact methodology for scoring based on several established criteria, but only compares the existing and “with project” conditions and does not get into the details behind different design treatments. Differences between the bridge types are addressed qualitatively. Trevor expressed concern that design elements could actually have environmental impacts. He noted the use of lighting and the creation of nesting sites as examples. He said that while showing blank designs is fine, there should also be options that allow people to provide comments on environmental and aesthetic impacts. He noted that these questions would not be conveyed through a simple apples-to-apples comparison.

Charlotte noted concerns over the separation of the bridges. She asked whether the additional 24 feet for the through-arch makes a difference in terms of lost trees. Tim explained that the footings would be the dominant element, and would be roughly the same for all types. Trevor noted that the default evaluation is of the largest bridge type. Charlotte noted that removing the trees in the right of way would change the look of the park. Lou said that substantial landscaping would be necessary for all of the alternatives.

Charlotte asked whether a through-arch was feasible within the existing right of way. Tim explained that they were keeping the permanent features of the project within the existing right of way and that a wider bridge, with an additional 24 feet, would mean that higher retaining walls would be needed than with other options. A narrower bridge would not require the use of walls. Ann noted that trees would have to be removed whether they are affected by fill or by a wall. James noted that the tree removal can be mitigated by placing mature trees after the structure is completed. Lou noted that other plants can also be used to improve roadside appearance on slopes. Park lands could be acquired to avoid the need for walls or steep slopes, but the burden of proof to acquire parkland is strict if there is a viable alternative that fits within the existing right of way. Tim suggested that the park could play some role, with a flatter slope being incorporated into the park environment.

Charles asked whether the EA considers carrying capacity for future traffic volumes and the corresponding environmental impacts. James said it does not because the project does not specifically increase capacity. The EA is focused on the bridge which is limited by the connections to the freeways. The EA does note that the bridge itself will be wider than the detour bridge but the approach roadways will remain the same. Consequently, the capacity of I-5 is not increased. The EA does not address what would happen if the capacity for the system were to increase since there are no adopted plans to do so. If capacity increases as the result of future widening, that process would require a separate NEPA analysis. The bridge could accommodate future widening of I-5 north and south of the bridge, but that would likely require an EIS.

APPROACH FOR MEETINGS

Jamie noted several key messages for the public hearing:

- Highlight outcomes of EA analysis - *this is the primary purpose*
- All bridge types improve current conditions [Potential for healthier river?]
- Show apples to apples comparison, with tradeoffs
 - Maintenance
 - Overall cost
 - Footprint
 - Opportunities for design
- Show the possibilities of design showing pictures from other areas - not a charette, but rather convey a sense of possibilities for each bridge type,
- Clearly articulate the when and how of the design conversations.
- Questionnaire to solicit input on impacts, EA, public values, and tradeoffs.

Jamie noted that they would like to have the newsletter out one week before the EA is released. She asked for comments on the draft newsletter by November 26. Edits are welcome, but she encouraged comments on the information and established expectations.

Trevor asked when it would be appropriate to bring up the potential impacts of design elements. Tim said that they could be brought up now for inclusion in the EA. James noted that the January 8, CAG meeting would serve as an opportunity to discuss any concerns about the contents of the EA document.

Jamie asked James how elements that pose an impact can be identified and reported. James explained that they use a generalized “box” to quantify the largest possible impacts. Comments will be incorporated into the EA and Revised EA. If the EA is released in mid-December, comments could be submitted throughout January, though earlier is better.

Charlotte asked about lane striping on the new bridge. Tim explained that while the bridge will be striped for two lanes (each direction), it can have up to three with standard shoulders or four with substandard shoulders. He noted that there is not much flexibility with regard to bridge width since the width was specified by FHWA.

Jamie covered the next steps:

- Newsletter input by 11/26
- PDT 11/30
- Mailing List Input 12/7
- Newsletter out week of 12/7
- EA distributed 12/18
- CAG 1/8/2008
- EA Hearings week of 1/14
- Close public comment 1/31

David Sonnichsen said that he appreciated the discussion of the bridge concurrent with discussion of impacts on the river. He suggested the possibility of a healthier river at project completion, but also noted the importance of discussing construction and deconstruction.

NEXT MEETING

January 8, 2008 10-1pm

CLOSE