

Summary – Meeting #9

Community Advisory Group – I-5 Willamette River Bridge Project

March 11, 2008, 10:15 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

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

ATTENDANCE

CAG Members

- John Barofsky – Co-Chair, Fairmount Neighbors
- Charlotte Behm – Representative, Springfield Neighborhood (and member, CPC for Whilamut Natural Area)
- Pat French – Planner and CPC Representative, Willamalane Park & Recreation District
- Rich Hazel – Co-Chair, Laurel Hill Valley Citizens Association
- David Sonnichsen – Chair, CPC for Whilamut Natural Area
- Bob Kline – Chair, Harlow Neighbors
- Trevor Taylor – Natural Resources Supervisor, Eugene Parks and Open Space Division

Resource Team

- 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
- Kalin Schmoldt – Public Involvement Assistant, Jeanne Lawson Associates
- Lissa Willis - ODOT

Other Attendees

- Chris Henry – City of Eugene
- Charles Biggs – Alternate, CPC for Whilamut Natural Area
- Ken Madox – Hamilton Construction
- Zach Vishanoff – Eugene Citizen

Handouts

- Agenda
- DRAFT Summary of CAG Meeting #8
- Final Summary of CAG Meeting #7
- Final Summary of PDT Meeting #5
- Final Summary of PDT Meeting #6

WELCOME AND AGENDA REVIEW

Lou welcomed group and noted Jamie's absence. The meeting purpose is to update the group on the Environmental Assessment and comments received, discuss the bridge types web survey, and discuss the next steps in the process. Lou led brief introductions where CAG members and visitors identified themselves and their interest in the project.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Zach Vishanoff– Indicated that he did not believe a multi-way boulevard plan, which he described as an effort to add plazas and walkable boulevards to Franklin Avenue, was good for Eugene and noted a backlog of other projects that need to be addressed first. He acknowledged the unique funding sources for the projects but noted the importance of addressing citizen concerns. He encouraged that the Willamette Bridge project distance itself from the boulevard project to avoid future potential conflicts.

Zach said that the Riverfront Research Park needs to have a new study funded regarding public needs for that area. He noted that the public seems to want a greenway, though planning and political forces weren't addressing these needs.

Zach noted that only one end of the historic millrace structure was being evaluated for impacts in the EA instead of looking at the millrace comprehensively as a whole entity.

COMMITTEE BUSINESS

Summary of Meeting #8– Kalin noted that the meeting summary had been sent out early to allow for more timely review. He said he would try to provide summaries within two weeks after meetings. Lou noted the finalized PDT summaries and encouraged comments by email.

PROJECT UPDATE

A&E Selection– Tim noted continuing negotiations with OBEC and said they hoped to have them hired by April. Bob asked for information on OBEC's background and experience. Tim explained that OBEC is an established Eugene firm that has designed many bridges throughout Oregon and has a long history of designing bridges for ODOT. OBEC is teamed with TY Lin, an internationally known design firm.

CM/GC Selection– The procurement process is underway for the CM/GC firm. Proposals are due March 14, and will be followed by interview process. The CM/GC firm will hopefully be on board by July 1.

EA Comments Received

Lou noted the public hearings on the EA that were held at the end of January. The comment period lasted just over 30 days and is now closed. About 40 people attended the hearings held in Eugene and in Springfield. Fourteen people submitted comments as part of the hearing and four others submitted oral testimony. In all, 32 people submitted comments including five government agencies.

James noted some of the issues that had been raised, including: inconsistent or contradictory information in the document; concerns about noise, dust, and air quality; duration and use of construction and staging areas; haul routes; how park users would be affected; concerns about Franklin Blvd.; consistency with local land use; questions about section 4(f) and 6(f) (parks) impacts; wildlife and wildlife habitat; mitigating impacts to the Whilamut area; maintaining safety on trails; lighting for safety and navigation; lighting spilling into other areas; hydraulic impacts; use of the area under the bridge as a Mountain Bike skills course; recycling; environmental monitoring; hazardous materials; bridge types; coordinating with utilities; peak oil and fossil fuel consumption; upstream dam failures; noise walls; and bridge naming. There were also suggestions for a hotline to connect the contractor with the public.

Response Process – James explained that the comments on the EA have been tabulated into a master worksheet. The team is currently in the process of organizing the comments and making recommendations as to whether the comments warrant revisions to the EA, reexamination of information, or whether they apply to a different part of the project. Comments that are deemed to be outside the scope of the project will be noted as such. The result will be a Revised EA (REA) that incorporates changes to the document and includes an appendix of comments. ODOT and FHWA are making the initial assessment which will be followed by conversations within the Technical team and comments from the PDT.

Charles asked for an assessment of the hearings and asked whether anything could have been done to improve turnout. James said he felt the event was adequately publicized and said that the range of comments received was fairly broad.

Comment processing is expected to finish mid-April and the REA should be complete by mid-June. FHWA will evaluate the comments and will be involved in responses. FHWA will approve the final document and a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) is anticipated. The REA will be submitted with a decision document that includes a recommendation for how to move forward.

John asked whether the REA will be reviewed by agencies like the EPA and US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE). James said that those agencies had already submitted comments on the EA. The REA will be a public document that is available for comment, though there will not be an additional round of revisions.

Trevor asked whether National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) had provided comments regarding Chinook salmon. James said that the interests of NOAA were coordinated through the Programmatic Agreements Reporting and Implementation Team (PARIT) and covered under the programmatic permits. NOAA was invited to be a cooperating agency but declined. Only USACE and National Parks Service (NPS) accepted the offer. Fish and Wildlife (FWS) also declined though FWS and NOAA did participate in reviewing the document. NOAA did not comment and said that they felt their interests were being managed through the PARIT process. NPS was the only contributor. James has presented the project to the PARIT group twice and will brief them again through Preconstruction Assessments (PCA) throughout the process. A FONSI will require other signoffs, many of which are covered by the PCA process. Permits, such as Section 404, will be covered in a programmatic fashion as long as the project maintains the standards agreed to under the OTIA III program. The PARIT group includes representatives from all the groups that would otherwise have a role in granting individual permits.

David asked how relevant the comments on the EA were to the actual EA document. James said that most comments were germane, though many of the comments from the hearing focused on the bridge types.

Review next steps in the process

PDT meeting 3/13 – The PDT will meet at LCOG. The agenda will be the same as for the CAG.

Finalizing the EA (REA/FONSI) – James explained that before ODOT can recommend that FHWA sign off on the FONSI, a metro plan amendment is needed regarding the movement of fill in the park. This is currently the critical path for the process and requires county and city approval. The application was submitted in late December and the joint planning commission hearing is

scheduled for April 29. May 13, would be an alternate hearing date if necessary. The REA would be in holding pattern while waiting for land use action approval. Heather O'Donnell at the City of Eugene is leading the staff report to the commission. Eugene is serving as the lead agency and Springfield and Lane County will make a combined recommendation. Approval of the application is anticipated for August.

Charles asked how public comments would be processed and incorporated. James said that comments would be on public record.

Charles asked when the Willamette Greenway fill permit would be considered. James said it would be brought up at a later time, as this process only deals with general cut and fill volumes. The Greenway permit would be issued based on more specific information and would be developed by the A&E firm.

Land use coordination with local jurisdictions – Lou said that mitigation measures will be coordinated with parks and open space with the intent of developing specific measurable commitments to work with throughout the process.

Lou said that the team is also available to discuss the process with neighborhood groups if needed.

Update on overall schedule – Lou said that while the process is slightly behind the original schedule, the delays have been necessary to include the appropriate process steps. Final design and construction is anticipated to begin summer 2009. Early work may include demolition, but can't begin until the project is permitted. Tim said that permits are anticipated for the CM/GC firm by May 2009. Early work can be final-design neutral and could involve demolishing the old bridge and/or building foundations.

Charlotte noted the importance of maintaining the pathways. Tim agreed that pathway continuity needed to be maintained and noted Eugene Parks and Open Space's strong advocacy for minimizing path interruptions.

Rich asked whether the A&E dates have shifted because of project delays. Tim said that while the land use process is taking longer, the EA is still on track. However, a FONSI won't be possible until the land use permits are in hand. The final design date could be moved, though the hope is to use the same in-water work periods.

Charles asked for clarification on the bridge removal process. Tim said the process details will be developed by the A&E and CM/GC firms. James said that only basic parameters were known at this time.

Zach asked whether SHPO had the opportunity to review the EA. James said they had reviewed the document and signed off.

Survey

Lou introduced the web survey that will be used to help narrow the bridge types by soliciting input from the wider community. Lou noted that the version being presented today was only the first cut and comments from the CAG were welcome. Kalin explained that the goal of the survey was also to

develop a sense of community values and considerations surrounding how the community imagines the new bridge.

After an introduction to the purpose of the project and the survey, visitors provide basic demographic information to help tabulate the responses. This is followed by a matrix of general values that could be reflected in the new bridge.

John suggested separating the values of “long term sustainability” and “construction sustainability” from the value of “environmental sensitivity.” He recalled previous discussions about building for the long term in higher impact areas so fewer disturbances are necessary later.

Trevor noted that it could be possible for respondents to select “very important” for every value. Kalin noted that some of the values opposed each other, such as the value of placing emphasis on local input for design, versus the value of emphasizing the input from a national bridge designer. He offered to modify the question format to make the responses more useful.

The section on values was followed by a free association exercise where respondents were asked to select words that fit their mental image of the new bridge. A space was provided where other words could be added. Charles expressed some concern about people having unrealistic mental images and suggested adding links to provide a context for some of the words. Kalin explained that the exercise was meant to be subjective and not meant to constrain the design team. James explained that the feedback will help provide initial ideas that will feed into design charrettes and/or workshops. John suggested making budgetary constraints known so people temper their vision.

Charles asked whether there were word limits for text boxes. Kalin said that some of the boxes were intentionally small to encourage shorter statements, though comment length is not restricted.

David asked how the CAG will be able to comment on the survey content. Kalin offered to send out an electronic version of the survey for review.

The free association exercise was followed by another matrix where respondents were asked to provide the importance of more specific bridge considerations that would not be considered values.

Charles noted that there was no “safety during construction consideration” listed. Kalin noted the value of “safe user environment,” but offered to make construction safety more overt.

The bridge considerations matrix was followed by a matrix listing six views of the bridge where respondents are asked to indicate which views they feel are the most important.

John asked that views “of” and “from” be emphasized to avoid confusion. He said that he didn’t expect “drivers passing through” to be well represented in the survey and so the importance of that view might be misrepresented. Charlotte and Rich noted that there is local interest in the driver’s point of view. Tim noted that the process is more concerned with community feelings and suggested changing the language to represent all drivers on the bridge.

Kalin suggested that respondents could rank the views to yield a better sense of priorities. John cautioned that a forced ranking could mislead the design team into thinking that one point of view is not important when all of the views are important. He expressed concern at how the design team

would construe any information that indicates one answer is more important than another. Lou noted that the CAG would continue to be involved throughout the design and can keep any assumptions about the survey in check. Pat noted that it may not be a problem if respondents consider all of the views to be “very important” if it accurately demonstrates priorities.

David expressed concern that some respondents could use the survey as an opportunity to bring up issues that are not bridge related, such as ramps to Franklin. He asked that a monetary limit and more background on the scope of the project be established early in the survey. Kalin noted that the questions in the survey were deliberately designed to avoid cost dependent design issues and offered to better define the limitations of the project in the survey preamble.

Kalin showed the survey pages that explained the various attributes and considerations behind each bridge type. After reading about each type, an optional comment box is available.

Charles suggested making it clearer that two bridges (one bridge in each direction) are being considered. Lou noted that the illustration of the I-girder bridge did not make that clear, and offered to create a new drawing.

John cautioned against using excess acronyms or jargon in the descriptions.

Charles noted the thumbnail picture of a box girder bridge that included bridge lighting that reflected in a body of water. He noted that it might be misleading to imply that such lighting was possible on this bridge. Lou noted the challenges inherent in finding examples of bridges that show only features that are possible on this project. He noted that images of above deck features on interstate bridges are quite rare. John suggested adding a caveat that explains how not all of the features shown may be possible on this particular project. Tim asked whether the pictures were necessary. Trevor said that he liked the pictures, as they demonstrate design possibilities. Rich agreed, noting that it was important to show real examples.

Charlotte and David said that they also didn't like the lit box-girder image and they were opposed to options that would create light-bleed into the park. Bob suggested that the lighting could contribute to the bridge as a gateway feature. Tim noted said that decorative directional up-lighting might not create as much bleed as much as one might think. Trevor said that he didn't think it was the CAG's place to limit the examples that are shown to the public. Kalin suggested cropping the picture to remove the water element. Charlotte felt this was a good compromise.

Charlotte noted there was an attractive deck arch bridge in the OBEC bridge calendar, Kalin said he would check to see which she was referring to.

The final section of the survey asked respondents to rank the different bridge types based on what they want to see in their community.

Lou asked for suggestions on distributing the survey and noted that the survey would probably be up for two to four weeks beginning in mid April.

John suggested taking out a newspaper ad. Chris suggested using the news briefs section of daily news programs.

Rich suggested using a billboard on Franklin or I-5. Bob suggested using neighborhood mailing lists or a local mailing to neighborhoods adjacent to the project area. Kalin explained some of the challenges of using a postcard to advertise an online survey and offered to send an email to the CAG and interested parties list that could be easily forwarded to others.

John suggested composing a small article for use in neighborhood newsletters. Tim offered to send future relevant press releases to neighborhoods as well.

Charles requested that a sketch view of the bridges from the perspective of a driver on Franklin be added to the survey.

Kalin explained that only a few of the survey questions were required, and those were necessary to help categorize the responses and track which areas were being represented. He noted that there were a number of ways to keep track of whether people were taking the survey multiple times. In practice such ballot-stuffing was rare, even on highly contentious projects.

CAG Members

Lou noted the initial limitations on CAG membership and asked whether it was appropriate to add new members given the new phase of the project. He noted Chris Henry's suggestion regarding adding a member of the arts community.

John said that he like the idea of incorporating someone from arts community and from the design community. Tim suggested an AIA representative. Charlotte noted **Art Paz** and **Eric Gunderson** as possible design representatives. John suggested **Mark Gillem**, a professor at U of O who has done work on the Franklin Corridor. Charlotte suggested that representatives from Springfield be included. Tim noted that **Dan Egan** from the Chamber of Commerce had declined. Rich cautioned against letting the group get pushed in a new direction by new membership and suggested that new membership be narrowly focused.

David said that he would prefer an actual artist versus an arts bureaucrat or arts administrator. Charles asked whether there was an actual budget for art associated with the project. Tim said that the Eugene City Council had encouraged that the arts community be involved. Lou also noted general interest in incorporating art into the design. Chris said that Eugene Library Recreation and Cultural Services had recommended **Bill Blix**. Bob said he would consult with the Springfield Chamber and the Futures Committee regarding a Springfield representative from the arts community. Charlotte noted the need for artists who are civically involved. She suggested that it would be advantageous to involve people from Glenwood and to provide more racial and gender balance on the committee.

Lou noted the CAG consensus to add two new members representing the arts and design communities. He encouraged the committee to send suggestions for representatives.

Next CAG meeting – May 6

Handout issues tracking list – Lou noted the Issues Tracking List in the packet. He explained that the list of issues would be given to the A&E with the explanation of how these are important community issues to consider. Kalin explained that the list included various ideas that had contributed to the formation of the project Goals and Objectives, but which might not be

completely explicit in the final list. The list is not meant to be a checklist of tasks, but rather a reminder about ideas and concerns from the community.

John noted that the issue of ramps to Franklin was listed. Tim acknowledged that such issues were present, even if they were out of scope. Even so, such ideas did feed the decision not to preclude the possibility of ramps at a future date. He suggested changing the terminology used in the list and describing it as a list of public concerns or public ideas.

Lou encouraged comments before or at the next meeting.

A&E on board – The A&E firm is anticipated to be on board by the next CAG meeting.

Results from survey – Copies of the survey will be sent out for review. Survey results will be available at the next meeting.

Close

The next CAG meeting is scheduled in the Tykeson Room. The committee indicated that they liked the Singer Room despite the need for a later start.