

Community Task Force (CTF) MEETING NOTES

April 23, 2007
5:30 to 8:30 p.m.
SMILE Station

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Meeting Objectives

Discuss results of public involvement activities and continue narrowing down range of alternatives.

Key Points

Members discussed new alignment alternatives suggested by the public, as well as the tunnel and interchange options.

Action Item Completed

The CTF also agreed to eliminate the tunnel from further consideration and to limit the west interchange options to the signalized option recommended by the project team

Action Items for the Next Meeting

- Discuss additional details of public meeting and responses to online survey.
- Compare alignment characteristics distributed at this meeting.
- Discuss bridge width and other options.



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Attendees

CTF Members: Barbara Barber, Jason Barbour, Gary Barth, Bill Dickey, Elliott Eki, John Fyre, Dorothy Gage, Laura Jackson, Ken Love, Richard Marantz, Tina Nuñez, Lidwien Rahman, William Ross, Scott Thayer, Brian Wilson

Staff: Office of Commissioner Maria Rojo de Steffey: David Martinez; Multnomah County: Ian Cannon, Michael Eaton and Mike Pullen; Metro: John Gray; City of Portland: Maurice Leclerc; CH2M HILL: Marcy Schwartz and Steve Katko; Cogan Owens Cogan: Elaine Cogan and Suzanne Roberts; Jeanne Lawson and Associates: Alex Cousins; Parisi and Associates: David Parisi

Guests: Megan Adkins, Steve Adkins, Doug Allen, Dan Gallaph, Pati Gallaph, Dan Grogan, Jim Howell, Arlene Kavlock, Philip Krain, John Lattig, Donald Leap, Storie Mooser, Rich Morgan, Eric Norbere, Ann Pearson, Steve Pearson, Diana Richardson, Dick Springer, Tom Walsh

Welcome and Introductions

Elaine Cogan opened the meeting by reviewing the agenda. There were no comments on the summary of the previous meeting.

Public Comments

Representing Diana Richardson, consultant Peter Fry described plans for her property on the east side of the Sellwood Bridge. She intends to develop it as an entryway into Sellwood and be a positive part of the neighborhood.

He said some of the alternatives the CTF have discussed would negatively impact these plans. He asked that the CTF specifically consider placement of a signal at 7th and Tacoma that would, among other things, minimize speeding cars into the neighborhood.

Discussion followed. Questions and comments by the public and the CTF are paraphrased in italics. Staff responses follow in regular print.

Where do you think the bridge should go?

Peter Fry: *We like the bridge where it is and want it to be designed for easy access into Sellwood, ideally transitioning into Tacoma as drivers enter the property.*

If the bridge remains in a straight line, wouldn't it take out the property to the south?

Peter: *Not unless it is built really wide. In our plans for the property, we want to make the buildings compatible with what the CTF decides on.*

Jim Howell, Associate, Oregon Rail and Transit Advocates: *In the eight to ten years before this project is built, problems with the transportation system in the area need to be addressed. These include weight restrictions and possible closures of the bridge during construction. Possible solutions could be an east-west bus route to relieve traffic in the corridor, frequent bus service such as that on 82nd or MLK Blvd. and small ferries that can carry a bus.*

Tom Walsh: *The County seems to be running out of money for various projects. I'd like to know where money for this project would come from. Estimates show traffic levels for 2030 increasing to double in Clackamas County what it would be in Multnomah County. Given that, it seems that Clackamas County should have some responsibility for this project. It appears that Clackamas rejected this project while Multnomah wants to spend money to impact its residents.*

Furthermore, there is no justification for heavy trucks on either the bridge or surrounding streets. Non-local trucks are discouraged from using these streets and such trucks are rare in the area. The City of Portland is the road authority for these and can restrict their use on streets in the area. On Sixth Avenue there is an authorized sign. The City should be banning large trucks from Tacoma Street. Alternatives under consideration by the CTF conflict with the City's plans. The Sellwood Bridge should be restricted to bicyclists and pedestrians and if autos are allowed, their loads should be restricted. I like the idea of a ferry and hope the CTF will consider a tunnel.

Diana Richardson submitted a letter from Alan Mela, property owner. It is attached to this summary.

Elaine noted that all public comments are included in the meeting summary, which can be accessed on the project Web site.

Response to Previous CTF Requests for Information

Michael Eaton distributed an addition to the project glossary that explains the Tacoma Mainstreet Plan and South Willamette River Crossing Study.

Did the Mainstreet Plan refer to loads?

No, it did not.

Did the City follow up to see if conditions improved on Tacoma Street as a result of implementation of that plan?

Implementation of the plan significantly increased traffic flow. Traffic cutting through neighborhoods was reduced, but we cannot recall effects related to trucks. No data are available.

Michael also clarified misunderstandings he heard at the public workshop. The first was that the city should have prevented Mr. Wasson from getting a permit for his property as it may be affected by a new bridge. Michael answered that a year ago, when Mr. Wasson requested his permit, the CTF had not yet been formed, so it would not have been fair to deny him his property.

Was he informed that there would be a project?

He knew there was a possibility of widening the bridge that would affect his property.

Another comment at the public workshop was that the County and state are conspiring to make the bridge four lanes wide because the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) will not pay for a two-lane bridge. This is not correct. Two lanes can be funded. The FHWA has directed the County to keep the two-lane rehabilitation option on the table.

In response to a previous question about forecasted demand, David Parisi said that the current distribution of bicyclists and pedestrians on the bridge is two-thirds bikes and one-third pedestrians during peak times. If the facility were improved today, the numbers probably would triple. We will have more updated numbers, which will include freight, in the next few months.

How many trucks used the bridge before the weight restrictions?

We estimate about four percent.

What percentage of the estimated increase in bicycle and pedestrian trips would go around the recreational loop as opposed to Highway 43 or the cemetery? The cemetery board is concerned there will be many more bicyclists through their property.

We do not have that information.

Bicyclist numbers have significantly increased.

During the public workshop, we heard that car trips would increase 25% by 2030. Is that correct? Some people said that number sounded low.

That number is the comparative demand. That does not mean that cars would be served because the bridge is at capacity now during peak times.

Results of Criteria Weighting Workshop

Marcy Schwartz distributed a revised list of results from the evaluation framework weighting exercise, with a correction that had been emailed to the CTF previously. It more accurately includes results from both rounds of the exercise. CTF member Richard Marantz had called this to the attention of the consultant.

Public Involvement Update

Mike Pullen reported on meetings with property owners affected by the concepts under consideration. Among the issues mentioned are a possible additional new northern alignments, which may have fewer impacts on private property, a double-deck concept, and keeping the old bridge for bicyclists and pedestrians. Cemetery and funeral home access is another important consideration to some property owners. Staff Jennings is concerned about its access road and sharing access with the floating home community. The company wants to stay in its current location, but does have a Eugene store that is not on a body of water. The owners of Riverpark Center, the office building, are concerned about the difficulty of finding tenants until the alignment is certain. Jim Wasson expressed concerns about selling or leasing the commercial and residential units in his building that is under construction. Alan Mela owns the building under the bridge and is comfortable there now. He would be affected by some of the concepts.

Mike and Alex Cousins reported on the April 4 public workshop, which was attended by 333 people, including many CTF members. Most attendees were from the Sellwood neighborhood. Some participants asked for more time for questions-and-answers. The County will offer a session at SMILE station, possibly in June.

That is a good idea.

Many attendees at the open house support a new northern alignment as a way to decrease impacts on residences. Many also favor keeping the bridge at two lanes and no more than 53 feet wide. There also is support for an unsignalized intersection on the west side and for a double-deck bridge separating autos from bicyclists and pedestrians.

New ideas include building a tunnel, and using a ferry from the old boat ramp.

Was this the first time people asked about tolling Clackamas County commuters? I have never heard that idea before.

That can be part of our funding discussion which will occur after we narrow down our alignment options.

Alex then presented preliminary results of the online survey. It was open for about a month and received 1, 883 responses, from people living in a wider area than represented at the public workshop.

Has there been a public survey of willingness to pay for improvements, possibly through tolls or local taxes?

That question has not yet been asked, but it might be in the future. We will conduct an online survey at each decision point of this project.

Have you asked people why they may not use the bridge now when they once did? For example, maybe they no longer believe the bridge is safe?

No, we have not asked that question.

Discussion of Range of Alternatives

Marcy said the project team received many comments and additional ideas about the alternative concepts that were distributed at the last CTF meeting. Tonight the CTF will review all of them with the goal of narrowing them down to those most feasible to continue studying. Steve Katko reviewed the concepts presented at the last meeting, followed by a description of three new northern routes (Gold, Teal and Pink) and a new southern alignment (Burgundy) suggested by the public. The possible alignments were color-coded for ease of discussion.

I like lining up with Taylors Ferry but not along the park (Gold). Could this alternative be combined with the Teal or Pink concept? In other words, could it cross the river diagonally?

It creates a curve and takes out part of the park. That would be an important tradeoff. The Purpose and Need statement the CTF approved includes tying to Hwy 43. The concept you describe pushes everything to the north.

This concept (Gold) impacts property at Spokane and SE Sixth and Seventh.

How heavily used is Powers Marine Park?

It seems to be mainly used by fishers and passive users on the beach. We will develop more definitive data on this as part of the Draft EIS (Environmental Impact Statement).

Were these new options proposed by many people, or just one?

We heard much interest in some kind of northern route. It is important to consider not only how popular an option is but how good it is in terms of tradeoffs.

Steve then presented the tunnel concept. The facility would need to be about 100 feet deep. This creates challenges, especially on the west side where the land rises quickly. The tunnel would have to go under Tacoma Street and be away from the existing bridge to avoid impacts during construction. It would daylight at 16th Avenue.

Would taking down the existing bridge change where the tunnel needs to daylight?

Probably not.

Could we take advantage of the topography and daylight closer to McLaughlin?

I like this idea, but what is the cost analysis? Is it realistic?

We will talk about costs later tonight.

Where would bicyclists go?

The tunnel coming up to the surface at 17th would create challenges for bicyclists at the intersection.

How would the streetcar tie into this option?

Anything that can go on a bridge can go into a tunnel, but boring is expensive.

On the Gold alignment, is angling the other way and connecting to Bidwell or Bybee possible?

Our Purpose and Need addresses continuing to serve the same traffic users. Moving the alignment significantly north or south changes that.

Sellwood Blvd. is a narrow residential street. Bybee is much further north.

Would it be possible to use more of the river and less of the east side? All north alignments that go through the office building, could "S curve" parallel to the river. There could possibly be a causeway on the other side.

That would be unique. More piers in the river is an issue from a resource and navigation perspective. It is unlikely the resource agencies would permit an option that increases the cubic feet of piers in the water.

I have a concern about alternatives that make it easier to turn into neighborhoods, increasing the cut-through traffic.

The counter to that is that residents have a safer route.

Most alignments that tie into Tacoma affect the same pieces of property, specifically the new development. At the public workshop, many people suggested that rather than cutting through these properties, we should consider the Teal route. It goes through where the church is now and more through Tacoma, Spokane, Grand and Sixth.

Keep in mind that Sixth Avenue is at the same elevation at both Spokane and Tacoma . We need to gain height to get over Spokane.

Marcy then distributed matrices comparing a tunnel to a bridge. The staff recommends eliminating the tunnel from further analysis. CTF discussion followed.

How confident are you that the tunnel is 15 times more expensive than a bridge?

The estimate is based on cost data from similar projects.

Both the bridge and tunnel are consistent with the Purpose and Need.

The tunnel does not appear to accommodate bicyclists and pedestrians.

Bike and pedestrian facilities would be provided for separately, not in the tunnel.

I recommend striking the sentence that the bridge is for bicyclists and pedestrians. Instead, say the existing bridge could be used.

For completeness, it would be helpful to have a transit column, similar to that for bicyclists and pedestrians.

Agreed. These comments will be addressed in documentation of the decision.

I am concerned about the way cost is listed. The bridge alternative is not the most likely one. The tunnel does resolve some neighborhood impacts, which is a high priority. We need to compare it to a more likely bridge option.

It would be better to present cost as an order of magnitude that is relative rather than absolute.

A tunnel from Tacoma Street to McLaughlin would be great and would not be expensive.

Improvements to Tacoma Street are outside the scope of this project.

The CTF agreed to eliminate the tunnel option from further consideration.

Next, David Parisi and Steve Katko reviewed two interchange options for the west end of the crossing. Of many the project team originally considered, one signalized and one unsignalized concept provided the best traffic operation.. The level of service is projected to be a B and C respectively, which is very high.

From a traffic perspective, the at-grade intersections would perform under capacity.

Given the new alignment concepts under consideration, are there other interchange options available?

There are none that don't have severe congestion and safety issues, or that don't take up considerably more right-of-way.

Are overhead pedestrian walkways needed over the cloverleafs?

According to Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) standards, it would be difficult to have the crossing over the roadway. We have found that people seem willing to cross this route.

Have you discussed bus stop locations with TriMet?

Yes. The signalized interchange provides the most flexibility. Location of bus stops for southbound Hwy 43 is problematic now. Northbound buses probably would stop on Hwy 43.

Operations are not a critical difference between these concepts. In terms of footprint, the trumpet design is almost twice as wide.

Would this information be true with a two-lane bridge?

Yes.

I am hesitant to eliminate interchange concepts before we know where the bridge will go.

These go with all the alignment options.

What do the cemetery managers say about use of their private property for public access?

They want to maintain access for their customers, regardless of the interchange we choose.

Are we encouraging the public to violate property rights of the cemetery owners?

They have allowed use of the cemetery paths by bicyclists and pedestrians thus far.

I am concerned about the significant amount of public support I have heard for the trumpet interchange concept. If the level of service for these options is similar, public education is needed.

From the public perception, free flow is considered good. Both would have better safety performance than the current interchange.

A column indicating expected safety performance should be included.

We also have bicyclists and pedestrians to think about. Signalized is best for them to cross.

Bicyclists and pedestrians do not pay attention to signals anyway. On signalized interchange there are five crosswalks. No matter how many crosswalks you have, people will cross where they want to. With the trumpet, couldn't there be metered access to the bridge? Pedestrians could push a button to stop traffic.

That could be considered, but it would be unusual for drivers. Trumpets with regular signals at ramps could provide protection. But it is not sensible to build a free flow interchange form and put signals on it—that defeats its purpose.

Do freight stakeholders like the trumpet concept?

We prefer the signalized concept.

From a bike perspective I favor the signalized option. What is the auto perspective?

From the auto perspective, the signalized concept looks safest and is better for traffic flow. An unsignalized interchange encourages people to crowd in front of each other.

The CTF agreed to eliminate the trumpet concept, documenting the operational and safety issues. The CTF also agreed to eliminate the tunnel from further consideration and to limit the west interchange options to the signalized option recommended by the project team.

We haven't talked about streetcar restrictions.

The CTF generally agreed to keep the signalized interchange for further analysis.

Marcy distributed a comparison matrix for alignment options, asking the CTF to review it before the next meeting. Members also discussed logistics for a tour of the neighborhood on May 7, immediately before the next CTF meeting.

Meeting adjourned

Action items to be addressed subsequently:

Task	Responsible Party
For future comparison matrices, describe cost as a matter of scale.	Marcy Schwartz
For future comparison matrices, include expected safety performance.	Marcy Schwartz
Offer SMILE an opportunity for a public question and answer session.	Mike Pullen