



Public Open House – Refined Preferred Alternative

DATE: September 30, 2009
TIME: 5:30 TO 7:30 P.M.
LOCATION: Oaks Park Dance Pavilion

The sixth public open house for the Sellwood Bridge project was held on Wednesday, September 30, 2009 from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. at the Oaks Park Dance Pavilion. The meeting was structured to encourage community members to visit a variety of informational stations staffed by members of the project team, with the primary purpose being to update the public on refinements made to the Preferred Alternative over the summer.

Approximately 130 people attended the meeting, which had been publicized through a postcard mailing to 23,000 households in the project vicinity. The open house was also announced through the project website, local media and interest group websites and blogs.

Unlike previous Sellwood Bridge open houses where specific feedback was needed from the public to advance the project to the next planning step, this meeting was mostly an informational check in point. The purpose of the open house was to review modifications made to the Preferred Alternative as well as mitigation options for impacts to parks, historic and natural resources. The team also highlighted the project schedule and proposed funding options. The meeting was staffed by members of the consulting team and staff members with Multnomah County, City of Portland and ODOT.

Meeting participants were welcomed at a sign-in table by project staff. As people signed in they were encouraged to visit the open house stations, view the displays and ask questions of project staff. The stations included:

- **Preferred Alternative** - Displays showing the modifications made since the Preferred Alternative was published in the Draft EIS (December 2008), including:
 - **Revised Preferred Alternative**
 - **Bridge cross-section**
 - **Bike/Pedestrian improvements**
 - **Westside interchange and access**
 - **Eastside details**
- **Mitigation for Historic Resource Impacts**

- **Mitigation for Parks & Natural Resource Impacts**
- **Funding Plan**
- **Next Steps**
- **Feedback**

Open House Overview

As with all of the project open houses, the meeting drew heavily from the Sellwood community. Westside residents and property owners were also well represented.

Macadam Bay residents seemed about evenly divided between support for the recommended Westside access (Option A) and concerns about their access changing (some want a stoplight on Hwy. 43). There were also concerns about impacts from the proposed bike/ped path (safety concerns and potential loss of tree cover).

There were many comments and questions about how cyclists and pedestrians would get from the bridge to the trails on the Westside. Some felt that the proposed design would encourage cyclists to simply use Macadam rather than bothering with the ramps, causing unsafe movements. Several cyclists expressed a preference for Copenhagen style bike lanes (raised beds with barriers between bikes and cars).

There were two main concerns about funding equity: One issue being the amount of project funding expected to come from Clackamas County given their high percentage use of the bridge. The second issue concerned the amount of bridge width dedicated to bicycle/pedestrian use compared to the width devoted to vehicular use (considering the main funding source being vehicle registration fees).

There are some emerging concerns about the proposed Streetcar – that the process is being rushed to accommodate it on the bridge and that proper planning and adequate public input in context with the Tacoma Main Street Plan isn't happening. There are also some concerns about Streetcar slowing down traffic on an already congested corridor and possible increase of neighborhood cut-through traffic due to streetcar.

There were a lot of comments praising the revised bridge designs and the public involvement process.

Comments Received

Comment forms were made available to all open house participants. 15 forms were turned in. The comment forms asked for open-ended feedback about the meeting and the project. The following comments were provided:

Bike/Ped Issues

- Bike lanes: I hope the project team can consider benefits of Copenhagen-style bike lanes, which slightly raise the on-street/in-shoulder bike lanes to separate them to some degree from motor vehicle traffic. Bumps that are used to separate lanes can sometimes be a hazard to bikes either by directly hitting them or having cars drive over them, getting pulled into the bike lane.
- Weak spot was the bike/ped area – nice guy there but he didn't have the detail of information that was wanted or needed for questions being asked.
- Copenhagen style bike lanes! Safety – maximizing safety for bicyclists in mixed-use shoulder/bike lanes using the raised bed and as much of a barrier – physical and visual – as possible will be important to minimize risks vs. motor vehicle accidents.
- Bike lanes = good, Narrow bridge = good, Streetcar tracks in place = good!
- The route for bikes to go southbound does not appear safe to me.

Streetcar

- There is very little discussion at this event about the possibility of streetcar rails being put on the bridge. While the city and community may be excited about the streetcar coming in, this bridge should not make or break decisions about streetcar before the city and neighborhood can properly go through planning and review, particularly in regard to the Tacoma Main Street plan and plans of neighborhood densities. The rails – either in planning or expense- should not “derail” this bridge planning, financing, and construction from getting under way.
- Make sure the streetcar can access the bridge.

Westside Interchange/Interchange Area Mgt. Plan Issues

- Suggest using existing path from Macadam Bay Club to the end of Miles Ct. and require the slope to be ADA compatible. DO NOT build 18' wide new bridge/ped path next to tracks. Keep it as a treed noise and light buffer for Miles Courts/Macadam Bay houseboats.
- PLEASE DO NOT ADOPT OPTION C!
- Option D – widen the path between Miles Place and Macadam Bay with separation of cars to Macadam Bay and ped/bicycles.
- Given neither Tacoma, nor Macadam are being expanded, why do we need such a massive underpass at the west end? Why not make minor improvements to what is there now!
- I like the changes to the Westside interchange and it looks like the property owners are happy with the accommodations to the plan.
- And thank you for keeping the west end a more manageable width – good job.

Cross-Section Issues

- If anything on the project should be narrowed or reduced it should be the overly-wide super-sized sidewalks and the bicycle infrastructure. Additionally those sidewalks and a proportional share of the bridge superstructure need to be funded through a local improvement district in the bridge influence area, and a bicycle tax. Transit users also need to chip in and pay some of the costs. It is a

form of discrimination to only tax motorists – especially when half of the deck space on the preferred alternative is reserved for bicyclists and peds. That is far more than 1% allowed under the law of motorist paid taxes that can be used for alternative transport infrastructure. It is about time those who want all these alternatives open their wallets and pay for them instead of just being freeloaders and a mouthpiece for change.

- The current design of the Sellwood Bridge still has two traffic lanes at its narrowest point. A total of 24 feet of width is set aside for vehicles while a total of 37 feet is set aside for bikes and peds. This seems out of balance especially in light of the new county vehicle tax to pay for the bridge.
- I believe consideration should be given to eliminating the 12 foot sidewalk on one side of the bridge and re-installing one 12 foot vehicle lane. At that point peds would have 12 feet, bikes 13 feet and vehicles/streetcar 36 feet. All these figures relate to the bridge at its narrowest point.

Plaudits

- Thank you Mike – not an easy task interfacing with the public, but thank you for having open lines of communication and doing what you do.
- Very informative open house. The presentations were clear and helpful. Thank you for all your hard work and especially for honoring the neighborhood's wishes that Tacoma St. not become a major thoroughfare.
- Good information over all.
- Appreciate the outreach to the public.
- Like the general approach.
- Thank you for this presentation, it was helpful to get a 3-dimensional concept of how everything fits together.
- Given the likely use of the bridge in the future the revised approach seems better balanced.
- I'm impressed by the current design. Thank you for listening to the communities' input.

Miscellaneous

- Aesthetics are very important, no more ugly bridges.
- Question: If you closed the bridge during construction would it be completed sooner?
- Don't forget to regrade the storm drain at 6th & Tacoma – it floods the whole intersection right now.
- My main concern will be medium to large trucks. The rush hour traffic now (cars and smaller trucks under 20,000 gross weight) cause long delays. Then mix in the big rigs with a new bridge and you have a real mess. Some type of study should be conducted. It will not take very many big boys (10 wheelers) to cause major traffic problems.
- The mitigation I see proposed is an absolute waste of money. Money down a rat hole with no benefit.

Comments from Staff

Ten members of the project team shared additional comments based on their conversations with open house participants. This input is reflected in the following general themes:

Funding

- Comments about the amount of project funding being contributed by Clackamas County – Some people were glad Clackamas County is paying something; others felt that the contribution should be higher based on the percentage of bridge users originating from Clackamas County.
- A few different people asked whether stimulus money would be used for the bridge and/or expressed concerns about funding.
- Most people seemed to think that the proposed county vehicle registration fee was pretty reasonable and were glad to see that the funding plan was falling into place
- Funding: Like the idea of tolls. Local vehicle registration fee also seems like a fair way to pay for bridge.

Property Owner Issues

- One potentially impacted property owner wanted to know how soon he could expect to get his money
- One directly impacted property owner wanted to know what he could tell his tenants about how long they could stay in the building
- Macadam Bay resident: Prefers widening existing paved path through butterfly park/Stevens Creek area and not building new regional bike/ped path adjacent to streetcar alignment. Concerned new path will remove trees that screen light and sound for Macadam Bay residents. Does not like Option A access due to safety concerns.
- Macadam Bay resident: Does not like Option A due to safety concerns. Prefers options that links Macadam Bay access to a traffic signal.
- Westside business owner: They like Option A and like the added bike/ped path along streetcar alignment.
- Miles Place resident: Likes Option A, since it avoids impacts to his street.

Bicycle/Pedestrian

- Sellwood resident had questions about bike routes and wanted to make sure we involve SMILE and the Sellwood neighborhood in the next round of design decisions to avoid having the neighborhood surprised and upset
- Safety/Cycling: concerns that out-of-direction travel time (for bicyclists) associated with crossing OR 43/bridge approach intersection and then looping under to connect to new bicycle trail will result in bicyclists turning directly onto northbound OR 43, which would be unsafe and impede motorists
- One guy was concerned that cyclists would not use the west side off ramps and would instead ride north on Macadam
- Cyclists coming out of the cemetery wanting to head north on the trail: it seems like they will have to make a tight turn back to access the south side off ramp.

Not an ideal movement for them - the same guy as above wondered if they would just take Macadam

- A number of people wondered about the turning radius of the switchback on the off ramps
- A few people commented on the cross walks: For example, will people try to run across the road rather than taking the whole crosswalk loop (there is no crosswalk straight across where cars exit the bridge on the west end)
- Nearly everyone who commented on the new bike/ped path thought it would be a good addition, provided it could be easily and safely reached from the bike/ped shared sidewalks on either side of the bridge.
- Before Option A gets built, a Macadam Bay resident asked if there could be signs alerting bicyclists that cars may turn into existing driveway. Cars off Macadam can't see bicyclists below, creating unsafe situation for bicyclists.
- Cyclists felt the shoulder/bike path will not be safe enough for them; they would like there to be a concrete rail between bikes and cars. I told them that would add 15' of additional width to the bridge: 2~6' shoulders and two extra rails. They didn't think shoulders were necessary, until I explained how emergency vehicles are able to scoot through on a two lane bridge when cars pull over into the shoulders.
- One cyclist did not like the fact that bikes making the WB>SB left turn had to cross the stream of WB>NB traffic and then ride between the two WB lanes at the west end of the bridge. I agreed and also showed him how it was possible to make a safe left using the crosswalks.
- Why so much width given for bike/peds?
- Can bike switchback ramp from the bridge to Springwater trail be added at the Mela building so that bike lanes don't have to continue between east abutment and 6th?
- Can the signal at 6th be moved to 7th? That is where everyone crosses today. 7th goes all the way up past the park where as 6th ends at Spokane.
- Lots of questions about how bikes/peds get from bridge down to trail on the west side.

Westside Interchange/Interchange Area Mgt. Plan Issues

- Input from two Macadam Bay residents – one was unhappy with the outcome and thought that our process was too short, the other was less unhappy with the outcome
- The business owners on SW Macadam south of SW Miles sounded generally pleased with Option A and the access it provided, but had some lingering concerns regarding the impact the proposed street car alignment might have on the buildings and infrastructure at the rear of their businesses.
- The resident from SW Miles I spoke to also was pleased with Option A but remained concerned about the impacts of the path and streetcar on his property, which is adjacent to their alignment.
- I heard mixed feelings from the Macadam Bay residents who attended. Two felt strongly that Option A did not provide safe access and was the worst for the community, strongly preferred either of the other options providing access from

a signalized intersection, and felt that the involvement process had not been what they'd been promised and that their input had been disregarded in making the decision. Another resident expressed that Option A hadn't been her preference but that she felt it'd work okay; she also emphasized the importance of providing clear signage for cyclists and Macadam Bay residents where the path crosses the driveway. A third couple expressed that this had been their second choice and was significantly preferable to Option C. This third couple would have also preferred the bike/ped path follow the current alignment, due to their concerns that the proposed path and streetcar alignment would remove a significant portion of the trees that would otherwise buffer them from the light and sound impacts from the streetcar and the highway.

- A few Macadam Bay homeowners said we are sacrificing their safety for the convenience of businesses and the Miles neighborhood.

Mitigation

- Mitigation Costs: several people commented that they were glad the project was aiding restoration efforts to the natural areas/parks on the west side of the river
- Mitigation Costs: A few people commented that spending any money to restore fish habitat/create better fish passage at the west side natural areas was a waste of money

Streetcar

- Streetcar is a good for the community
- Not a strong concern for streetcar on bridge and Tacoma; more inquiries about process and potential ramifications. City will meet with SMILE in October.
- Sellwood residents are skittish about the streetcar destined for Tacoma.
- According to one person, many Sellwood neighbors are monitoring plans for streetcar across bridge and expressing some concern that plan is moving too quickly without their input. Residents want to be involved in the streetcar planning in a separate project.

Miscellaneous

- Several people asked how long and how soon the bridge would be closed. They were relieved to hear that closure would be little or none
- Maintaining access across the river during construction is absolutely necessary;
- Structures constructed to contain and treat surface runoff must NOT provide the opportunity for graffiti
- 2 year construction period seems too short
- From several attendees: Interested in schedule for bridge type decision. Look forward to being involved. Want design to be of high aesthetic value as possible, since it is in their view corridor or they use bridge often.

Plaudits

- A number of compliments on the public process: I heard lots of appreciative comments that said that our project has met their needs in a very clever ways. I heard praise for the project team as being attentive and responsive, open-minded and community-minded.

- Nearly everyone seemed pleased with the design
- Overall people seemed fairly satisfied with the design