

## EQUITY ADVISORY GROUP (EAG) MEETING #35

Date and Time: Monday, April 15, 2024, 5:30pm to 7:30pm

Location: Zoom Webinar and YouTube Livestream

Number of concurrent YouTube viewers: 21

### WELCOME

Dr. Roberta Hunte, EAG Facilitator, welcomed EAG members to the meeting, explained how to view closed captions, gave instructions for public input, and previewed the meeting agenda.

### PROGRAM ADMINISTRATOR UPDATE

Greg Johnson, Program Administrator for the Interstate Bridge Replacement (IBR) program, began by highlighting the program's community involvement and recent activities. Johnson emphasized the collaborative efforts between the Oregon and Washington Commissions through the establishment of a bi-state toll subcommittee, which was formed through an intergovernmental agreement signed in January. This subcommittee is tasked with recommending toll rates and policies to the full Commissions of each state. He highlighted that the Commissions would work together to determine rate, hours of operation, time-of-day rates including truck multiplier rates, escalations, and possible exemptions or discounts. These topics will continue to be a focal point in the ongoing commission discussions, with decisions on rates and policies expected to be set approximately 6-8 months prior to the initiation of tolling. Johnson also noted the next scheduled meeting on April 19, 2024, and encouraged invested parties to stay engaged in the process. He continued and shared the IBR program's efforts to finalize the Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS). He highlighted the adjustments to the program's timeline, emphasizing the importance of understanding a key milestone critical to the program's progression. He discussed ongoing collaborations with the Federal Transit Administration and Federal Highway Administration to refine the Draft SEIS to better meet the needs of both the program and the community.

He also shared insights from his recent representation of the program at a conference in Chicago, where he engaged in discussions with Disadvantaged Business Enterprise about improving their effectiveness from an ownership perspective. These discussions underscored the program's national recognition for its innovative and leadership approaches. Johnson praised the EAG as a best practice example in managing large-scale programs and invited questions.

During the Q&A, an EAG member was curious about whether they can offer toll discounts in conjunction with public transit benefits, such as a reduced pass that includes free public transit rides to encourage less impactful travel methods. These discounts might be granted based on income or disability. Johnson responded positively, acknowledging it as an interesting concept. He suggested that if the group could

compile ideas related to this, his team would be willing to act as a conduit, bringing these suggestions to the commissions for consideration. He mentioned the need for creative tolling strategies, acknowledging their unpopularity but highlighting potential broader benefits.

## EQUITY UPDATES

Yemaya Hall-Ruiz, IBR Equity Team, opened the presentation by outlining the team's recent engagements with the EAG members to define their objectives for the upcoming year. She presented a report-out summarizing key insights from individual interviews with EAG members, which will guide the Equity team's initiatives and community engagement efforts.

Hall-Ruiz highlighted that EAG members shared the importance of actively engaging communities and creating economic opportunities for equity priority communities. They advocated for innovative, inclusive long-term plans, positioning the bridge as a symbol of community unity. Concerns about the effectiveness of virtual meetings for those less tech-savvy were also discussed.

She then shared recommendations for the coming year: organizing in-person events close to the program area to enhance transparency and community participation, developing a comprehensive communication plan to support equity in workforce development, and involving Disadvantaged Business Enterprises (DBEs) and Small Business Owners (SBOs). Additionally, she suggested implementing shorter, more focused meetings, complemented by occasional in-person events to strengthen community bonds. These strategies aim to improve overall engagement and effectiveness of the IBR program's equity-focused initiatives. She invited further feedback, particularly from those who missed the initial interviews or had additional insights to offer. She asked specific questions to prompt detailed responses: "What aspects of the EAG engage you most? Are there topics we haven't yet discussed that you'd like to address?"

During the discussion, an EAG member reinforced the Equity Framework as a foundational aspect of the program's development and communication. They emphasized the importance of regular updates on how equity principles are integrated across different program segments. Another EAG member shared a potential future topic could be addressing concerns about safety on public transit, specifically regarding the Max train and potential light rail on the new bridge. Johnson responded to the safety concerns by acknowledging that while light rail systems are generally safer than car travel, the perception of danger persists. He mentioned ongoing discussions with TriMet leadership who are addressing these issues proactively by enhancing security presence on trains. This collaborative effort between TriMet and C-Tran aims to dispel myths about safety on public transit, ensuring that the community recognizes the secure and reliable transportation options available. Lastly, an EAG member recommended the importance of engaging the youth, particularly high school students who see the future bridge as part of their daily routine. Johnson mentioned that they've held several youth-oriented press conferences involving high school and college journalism students to tour the bridge. He highlighted the importance of including young people in the conversation, as they and their future generations will live with the bridge. As part of the IBR program's equity strategy, youth have been identified as a key demographic. Efforts are being made to engage high schools, inform them about job

opportunities, and encourage active participation in public comment periods, ensuring young voices are included and heard in the program development.

## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Salome Chimuku, IBR Community Engagement Lead, opened her presentation by thanking everyone for their questions and referred to the data shared from the previous month's meeting, which were significantly influenced by miniature grants. She noted that this follow-up session was intended to foster further discussion now that the attendees had had time to review and consider the initial data. Chimuku introduced some guiding questions to help facilitate the conversation. She asked if attendees had any feedback in response to the community engagement overview shared last month and inquired about effective ways to share information to support and help get the word out about events. She shared that these questions were meant to reinitiate discussion and to gather attendees' insights on whether the information provided felt adequate. She expressed an interest in understanding if there were other types of information the community would like the team to collect as they prepare for more engagement activities, especially leading into the summer.

During the discussion, EAG members recommended looking into Prosper Portland's new grant program, which encourages major events in the Portland Metro area to attract large audiences, including out-of-state visitors. They considered how the IBR program could collaborate with funded transportation projects to enhance community engagement and diversity. They also proposed increasing the visibility of the IBR program at community events and on relevant websites to extend outreach beyond the immediate program area. Chimuku shared there's a plan in development to involve advisory group members in tabling events to deepen community interaction.

## CBAG UPDATE

Emilee Thomas-Peralta, IBR Equity Team reviewed the past several months of Community Benefits Advisory Group (CBAG) meetings, starting with September 2023 where the group was introduced to the community benefits of the Interstate Bridge Replacement (IBR) program, discussed roles and responsibilities, and set the stage for future discussions. Over the next months, they adopted the CBAG Charter and discussed various potential community benefits, such as workforce equity and economic opportunities, and how these could impact the local community once implemented.

By early 2024, CBAG had confirmed their first set of recommendations on time-sensitive community benefits and continued to refine their focus through presentations on workforce studies and potential benefits in various categories like mobility, accessibility, and physical design. These discussions aimed to integrate leading practices and accommodate local standards to ensure that the infrastructure changes would benefit the community sustainably and inclusively.

Looking ahead to future meetings, Thomas-Peralta outlined the schedule that includes topics such as consultations with Tribal governments and discussions on avoiding harm to the community during construction phases. The advisory group plans to continue exploring community-oriented benefits like creating safe, accessible public spaces and addressing environmental impacts, emphasizing the program's commitment to enhancing the community's overall quality of life through thoughtful, inclusive planning.

## TRANSIT STATION DESIGN DISCUSSION

Mahlon Clements and Steve Katko —IBR design team joined the EAG to continue the discussion on design concepts for the transit stations. Vancouver waterfront station information was presented in a previous meeting, so this conversation was to revisit the information shared for feedback. The team discussed the challenges and considerations for the design, such as accommodating bikes, improving walkability, and integrating different forms of transportation. The need for public comment and feedback was also highlighted, with the intention of returning to the group for feedback on their plans.

During the Q&A session, an EAG member raised concerns about the inclusion of escalators at the station, addressing the accessibility challenges they present. The response highlighted that escalators require weather protection to function reliably, so elevators were deemed a more practical solution. Another EAG member stressed the importance of improving the walking and rolling infrastructure not just at the station but throughout the corridor, pointing out the current area's lack of pedestrian traffic. The discussion then addressed a concern regarding bicycle access. It was explained that, due to the station's height, most people, including cyclists, would likely use elevators. The plan recommends installing two elevators at each entrance to accommodate the high usage expected, not just from pedestrians but also from cyclists, highlighting how the station design must consider different users' needs to ensure accessibility. The session concluded with an acknowledgment of the community's concerns and ongoing efforts to refine the design for better integration and accessibility.

## PUBLIC COMMENT

No comment

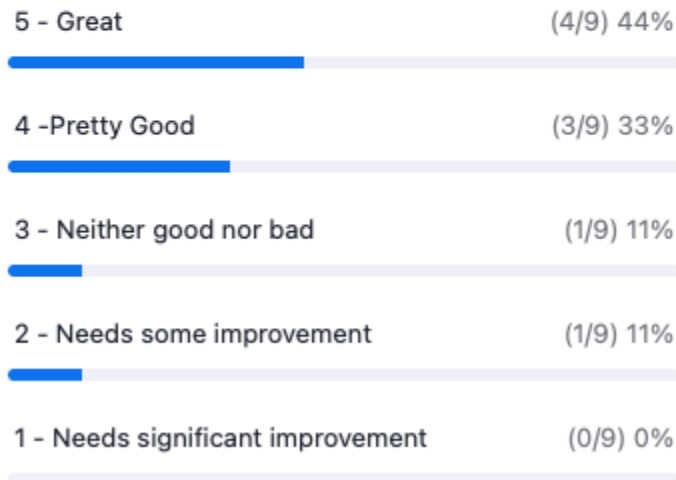
## MEETING EVALUATION POLL

### EAG Survey

00:01:32 | 1 question | 9 of 17 (52%) participated

1. How would you rate tonight's meeting, on a scale of 1-5 (Single choice) \*

9/9 (100%) answered



## ADJOURN

- Next EAG meeting: May 20, 2024, 5:30pm-7:30pm
- Following EAG meeting: June 17, 2024, 5:30pm-7:30pm

## ATTENDEES

Attendees	Organization/Affiliation
<b>EAG Members</b>	
John Gardner	TriMet
Alicia Sojourner	City of Vancouver

Attendees	Organization/Affiliation
Vicki Nakashima	Community member
Nicole Chen	City of Vancouver
Pat Daniels	Constructing Hope
Sebrina Owens-Wilson	Metro
Sokho Eath	IRCO
Meg Johnson	Community member
Chandra Washington	C-TRAN
<b>IBR Staff</b>	
Greg Johnson	IBR Program Administrator
Dr. Roberta Suzette Hunte	Facilitator
Emilee Thomas Peralta	Equity Team
Johnell Bell	Equity Team
Mahlon Clements	IBR Design Team
Nolan Lienhart	IBR Design Team
Salome Chimuku	Community Engagement Lead
Steve Katko	IBR Design Team
Yemaya Hall-Ruiz	Equity Team
Caryn Urata	Transit Design
Jim Ruddell	Program Manager
Shannon Singleton	Equity Team
Robert Arreola	Tech Support

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Attendees	Organization/Affiliation
Amanda and Andrea	ASL Interpreters
Tracy Ukura	Captioner

## MEETING RECORDING AND MATERIALS

### Meeting Recording

A recording of the meeting is available here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TSkQsTSDThE&t=96s>

The meeting materials are available here: <https://www.interstatebridge.org/get-involved-folder/calendar/eag-april-15-2024-meeting/>