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community



# Community Engagement Report

February — March 2021

April 16, 2021

# Community Engagement Report

## February — March 2021

Prepared for:



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## ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

CAG	Community Advisory Group
EAG	Equity Advisory Group
HCT	high-capacity transit
IBR	Interstate Bridge Replacement
SOV	single-occupancy vehicle

## 1. DOCUMENT OVERVIEW

This report details what the Interstate Bridge Replacement (IBR) program heard from the community between February and mid-March of 2021. The report is organized into four sections:

1. The **Executive Summary** provides an overview of the program’s community engagement including an explanation of the engagement approach, a summary of key takeaways, and themes from all engagement activities.
2. The **Outreach Tactics** section explains how the program shared the variety of opportunities to engage.
3. The **Engagement Findings** section provides themes, key takeaways and detailed information about what was heard from each engagement activity.
4. The **Conclusion** summarizes how the community feedback will help shape the program.

## 2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### 2.1 Program Context

The states of Oregon and Washington are working together to replace the aging Interstate Bridge with a modern, seismically resilient, multimodal structure that provides improved mobility for people, goods and services well into the next century.

The Oregon and Washington departments of transportation are jointly leading the IBR program (program) in collaboration with eight other public agencies representing both states: Tri-County Metropolitan Transportation District of Oregon (TriMet); Clark County Public Transit Benefit Area Authority (C-TRAN); Oregon Metro; Southwest Washington Regional Transportation Council; Cities of Portland, Oregon, and Vancouver, Washington; and the Ports of Portland and Vancouver.

The program is working closely with federal partners at the Federal Highway Administration and Federal Transit Administration to determine the best path for moving this critical program forward, which will include completing the federal environmental review process. As part of this process, the program will use previous planning work that remains valid to maximize past investments and support efficient decision-making. Extensive stakeholder engagement, inclusive community engagement, and a transparent public process are fundamental to identify changes that have occurred since the previous planning process to help establish a bridge replacement solution that will meet current and future community needs and priorities. Recent efforts have focused on reviewing the transportation problems identified by previous planning work that the program must address, and identifying the community values that should be used to shape program work.

## 2.2 Engagement Approach

Between early February and mid-March of 2021, the program held a targeted period of community engagement to (1) gather specific feedback from the public regarding the transportation problems they experience with the Interstate Bridge and (2) understand the community priorities and values that should help shape the program. The feedback gathered during this engagement period will inform work as the program begins to consider design options that will shape the details of a future bridge replacement solution.

This report summarizes public input received from more than 9,000 survey responses and 14,000 survey comments, community briefings, advisory groups, multilingual outreach, community-based organization outreach, public comments, and community listening sessions.

A variety of engagement activities were offered during this time period. Each activity served a different purpose, helping the program gather different types of feedback from stakeholders and community members. The activities included:

- Online open house
- Interactive survey
- Community briefings
- Advisory groups
- Community liaisons and multilingual outreach
- Community-based organization outreach
- Public comments
- Listening sessions

### 2.2.1 Equity in Community Engagement

The program is committed to centering equity, which means elevating the voices of historically marginalized communities so they can realize the program's economic and transportation benefits. It also means not furthering continued harm to these communities.

A key element of centering equity in the program is the work of the Equity Advisory Group (EAG) in tandem with the Community Advisory Group (CAG) and Executive Steering Group. The EAG makes recommendations directly to the program administrator.

Beyond the EAG, the program is committed to applying an equity lens in all community engagement activities. This means meeting people where they are, if not physically then virtually, and reducing barriers to participation.



## 2.2.2 Virtual Engagement

In response to the Oregon and Washington governors' direction to help slow and prevent the spread of COVID-19, all engagement events were held virtually. The program is aware of the technological barriers that virtual engagement may have on local communities, especially communities of concern.<sup>1</sup> In response, the program used live captioning for all virtual events, translated materials into eight different languages, and worked directly with community organizations and liaisons to reach communities that do not have access to virtual engagement. The program also engaged with organizations that work with houseless individuals via phone and email and shared print materials with a local food pantry located in the program area.

## 2.2.3 Who We Heard From

The majority of feedback came from Oregon and Washington residents indicating that community members in both states want to be engaged in the program. Community members who live far outside the program area also provided input, indicating the significance of the Interstate Bridge beyond the Portland-Vancouver region. The majority of participants were English speakers, but feedback was also received from community members who speak eight different languages. A disproportionate amount of survey responses were received from high-income earners and middle aged to older adults. These findings encouraged the program to hold listening sessions specifically for youth (ages 16 to 25) and communities of concern.

## 2.2.4 Key Takeaways and Themes

Among all engagement activities, including the interactive survey and live audience participation during community briefing events, advisory groups, and listening sessions, feedback from the community validated there is widespread agreement that the six previously identified transportation problems still exist: congestion and travel reliability, safety, earthquake vulnerability, impaired freight movement, inadequate bicycle and pedestrian pathways, and limited public transportation.

Consistently, congestion and travel reliability were ranked or expressed as the highest concern, with safety and earthquake vulnerability both ranked second and mentioned frequently. The majority of written comments focused primarily on topics that are either related to community values and priorities or are more solution-oriented, which will be part of the conversation once the program begins analyzing design options.

- **Transportation Problems:** Not only did community members rank congestion and reliability first in quantitative exercises, they also stressed congestion and reliability issues when prompted to discuss other program topics (e.g., safety) and when provided with opportunities

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<sup>1</sup> Communities of concern include (but are not limited to) people of color, people with disabilities, people with limited English proficiency, low-income households and individuals, houseless individuals, immigrants and refugees, and youth.

to submit comments or engage in a discussion. Community members expressed notable concerns about transportation safety including earthquake vulnerability and the impacts of substandard interstate design on drivers. The program consistently heard a strong desire for an improved public transit connection between Portland and Vancouver.

- **Transportation Solutions:** Throughout conversations with the community, the program received suggestions on transportation solutions for the replacement bridge. Many community members suggested design options and provided feedback on funding and financing mechanisms. Specific concerns regarding tolling were also shared including potential impacts on communities of concern and the distribution of the cost burden.
- **Community Engagement:** Community members indicated they value a cost-effective program with funding support that builds on previous work. They also want to engage in meaningful ways that are easy to navigate and are accessible. Although there was some skepticism expressed about whether community input would be taken seriously due to the virtual environment and timeline, others shared appreciation for the direct, in-depth engagement. The program also heard some uncertainty that the bridge replacement will occur, given that previous work to replace the bridge never reached construction.

### 3. OUTREACH TACTICS

The program used a variety of outreach tools to inform a broad range of stakeholders and community members about the opportunities to engage, with a specific emphasis on reaching communities of concern. This outreach included a mix of traditional tools, such as newspaper advertisements, and digital tools, such as social media.

#### 3.1 Social Media

The program used both advertising and non-paid posts to direct social media users to the virtual engagement activities. Between February 12 and March 1, 2021, a two-phased digital advertising approach was implemented on Facebook tailored to residents living in Oregon and Washington counties located near or within commute-range of the Interstate Bridge (including Multnomah, Washington, Clackamas, and Clark Counties). Facebook data and analytics allowed the program to understand the extent and reach of the two advertisement phases:

- Phase one of these promotional activities ran from February 12 to February 18, 2021, directing users to the program website and building awareness for the first virtual community briefing on February 18. During this phase, 318,971 unique users saw the advertisements that were displayed 1,006,699 times. Users clicked the advertisements 9,450 times.
- Phase two ran from February 24 to March 1, 2021, and routed users to the interactive survey. Survey participation rates increased dramatically with the launch of this second phase; there was a 365% increase in survey participation between phase one and phase two. During this time period, 421,173 unique users viewed the digital advertisements that were displayed 1,065,597 times. Users clicked the advertisements 13,239 times.

In addition to social media advertising, the program posted non-paid posts to Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. Program partners shared the non-paid posts on their social media pages to elevate the engagement opportunities to their networks.

## 3.2 Direct Mail Postcards

More than 50,000 postcards were mailed to residents that live in Washington and Oregon ZIP codes along the Interstate 5 corridor near the Interstate Bridge. The postcards provided a program overview, information on the engagement activities, and a QR code linking to the program website.

## 3.3 Print and Digital Advertising

Seven print and eight digital advertisements were published in local newspapers and e-newsletters including one print and digital newspaper in Spanish and another in Vietnamese. Two, 3-week-long digital advertisements also ran in The Columbian and The Oregonian/OregonLive. The OregonLive advertisements directed a considerable number of users to the interactive survey.

## 3.4 Radio Advertisements

Two radio advertisements were aired, one on KBMS and another on El Rey in Spanish. El Rey serves the largest Spanish-speaking audience in Oregon and Southwest Washington — 120,000 to 130,000 listeners. KBMS serves a primarily African American audience and has been an influential voice in the African American community in Portland and Vancouver since 1988. Today, it is the only African American locally owned and operated radio station in the state of Oregon. The KBMS headquarters and studio is in Vancouver.

## 3.5 E-Newsletters

Three e-newsletters were sent to nearly 7,000 subscribers to notify them about the opportunities to engage:

- February 5 – provided upcoming meetings and events.
- February 16 – promoted the online open house and interactive survey.
- February 26 – reminded subscribers about the online open house and interactive survey.

# 4. ENGAGEMENT FINDINGS

This section explains the types of feedback received and presents the community engagement findings, with one section per engagement activity. Each section contains key takeaways and themes in addition to a detailed analysis of “what we heard.” The findings are presented as follows:

1. Online open house
2. Interactive survey

3. Open-ended survey comments
4. Community briefings
5. Advisory groups
6. Community liaisons and multilingual engagement
7. Community-based organization outreach
8. Listening sessions

## 4.1 Types of Feedback

Across the variety of engagement activities, both quantitative and qualitative feedback were gathered to inform program outcomes. While the engagement period focused on obtaining specific feedback on community members' experiences with transportation problems associated with the Interstate Bridge and their values and priorities for a replacement bridge solution, ample opportunities were also given to provide input on the program process, the program's outreach approach, and other topics of their choosing.

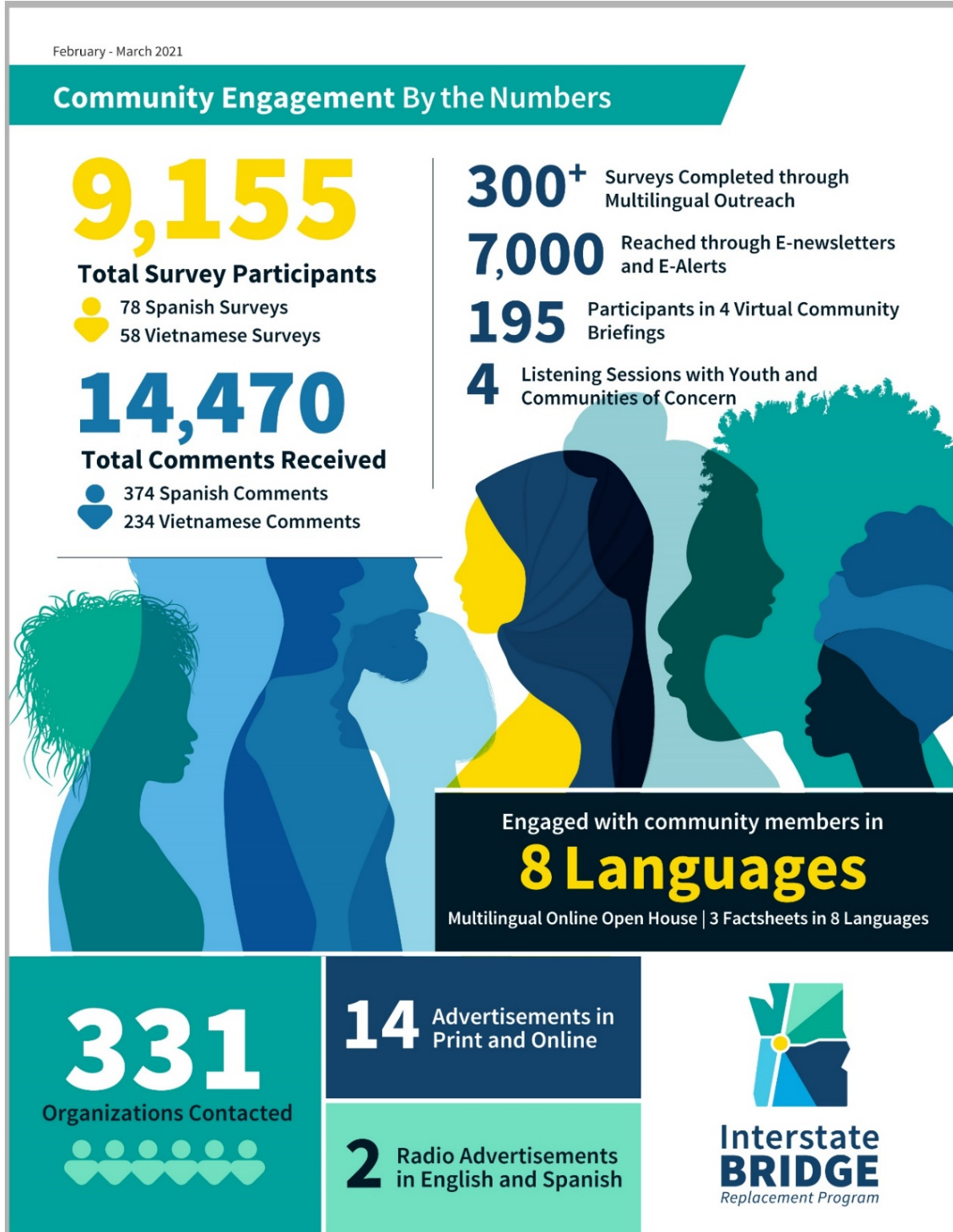
### 4.1.1 Quantitative Metrics

The program received and analyzed quantitative data from the interactive survey, live audience participation at community briefing events, and live surveys at advisory group meetings regarding the program's focus on purpose and need and community vision and values. Quantitative findings were also used to understand the effectiveness and reach of the program's community outreach. Figure 1 shows the community engagement efforts "by the numbers."

### 4.1.2 Qualitative Findings

Qualitative input was also received through phone and email conversations, advisory group discussions, listening sessions, and open-ended responses from the interactive survey. Some themes were directly related to transportation problems such as abundant comments received regarding congestion in the program area. Community members also made suggestions and asked questions about the program process, gave advice on the outreach approach, and shared thoughts on other program topics. A large number of open-ended comments proposed transportation solutions most relevant to bridge replacement design options.

Figure 1. Community Engagement by the Numbers



## 4.2 Online Open House

An online open house was held from February 16 to March 1 to provide background on the program and encourage community members to submit feedback to the program. A translation tool allowed individuals to view the open house in eight different languages. The online open house consisted of the following elements:

- Link to participate in the online interactive survey.
- Videos from program leadership to learn more about the program, including Program Administrator Greg Johnson and CAG co-chairs Lynn Valenter and Ed Washington.
- Exhibit boards providing information on purpose and need, vision and values, next steps in community engagement, and the program’s timeline.
- Comment form to provide open-ended input to the program.
- Contact information for assistance filling out the survey.

### 4.2.1 Key Takeaways

More than 9,000 new users visited the program website between February 16 and March 1. The online open house webpage was the second most-visited webpage users opened after visiting the home page (the community briefings page was the first).

## 4.3 Interactive Survey

The interactive survey was the most robust activity used to collect feedback on the transportation problems travelers face related to the Interstate Bridge and on the community values and priorities for a replacement bridge solution. The survey contained three activities with opportunities to provide open-ended comments at each activity. It was available on the digital platform in three languages: English, Spanish and Vietnamese. Spanish and Vietnamese were selected as alternate languages because they are the two most common languages spoken among those who identify as having limited English proficiency in the program area. Hard copies were translated into eight languages and made available through the program’s multilingual community liaisons.

While community participation in the survey was significant, the program recognizes this survey has limitations, including no guarantee of:

- Statistical significance within a margin of error.
- Demographic representation of the program area.
- Extensive input from those without internet access.

The interactive survey findings are presented in the following five sections:

1. Key Takeaways and Themes
2. Survey Demographic Results
3. Activity 1: Identifying Problems

4. Activity 2: Map Makers
5. Activity 3: Community Values

The open-ended survey comment findings are summarized in the subsequent sections.

### 4.3.1 Key Takeaways and Themes

The program received 9,155 survey responses and 14,474 open-ended comments through the interactive survey. While most participants completed the English-language version of the survey, 78 Spanish and 58 Vietnamese survey responses were also received.

Participants reaffirmed the six program needs identified in previous planning efforts and ranked congestion and reliability as the top problem in the program area. They also shared the priorities most important to them, helping the program define the community values that will be used to shape the solution.

Survey respondents provided more than 5,500 open-ended comments. The following categories emerged from the program's open-ended comment analysis (see Section 4.4):

- Congestion and reliability
- Public transit
- Active mobility, including pedestrian and bicycle
- Transportation safety
- Seismic (earthquake) resiliency
- Freight movement
- Design and aesthetics
- Cost and funding
- Climate and environment
- Equity

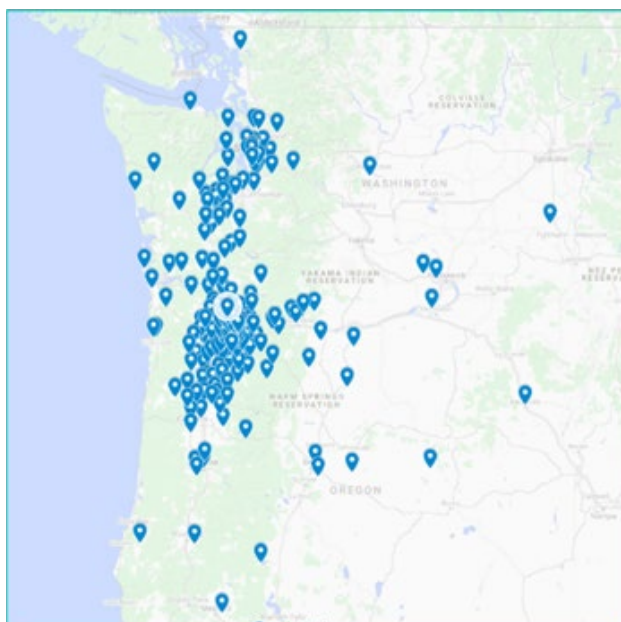
### 4.3.2 Survey Demographics

Of those that provided their location, about 2,700 were from Oregon and about 3,300 were from Washington. Around 3,000 people did not respond to the question about location. Most respondents live within the Portland metropolitan region. Figure 2 and Figure 3 show the geographic distribution of survey participants that provided their locations.

Figure 2. Geographic Distribution of Survey Participants in Portland and Vancouver



Figure 3. Geographic Distribution of Survey Participants by ZIP Code





Most respondents cross the Interstate Bridge on occasion or several times per month by driving alone. However, commute patterns and transportation mode choice have been significantly influenced by COVID-19 measures over the past year, which may have influenced these results. The travel frequency and mode of travel results are shown in Figure 4 and Figure 5.

Figure 4. Survey Participant Demographics: Travel Frequency

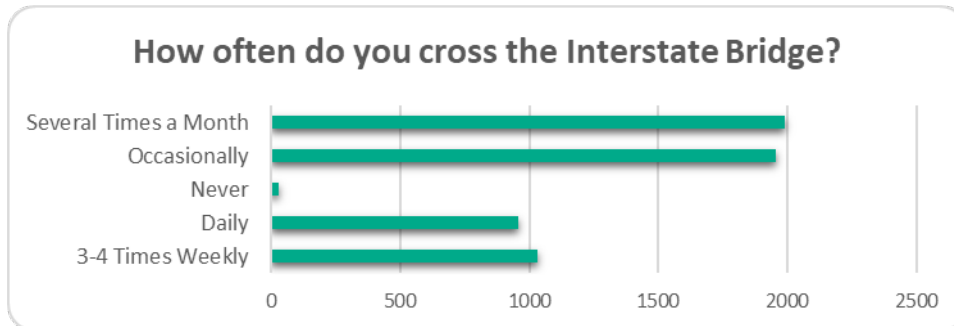
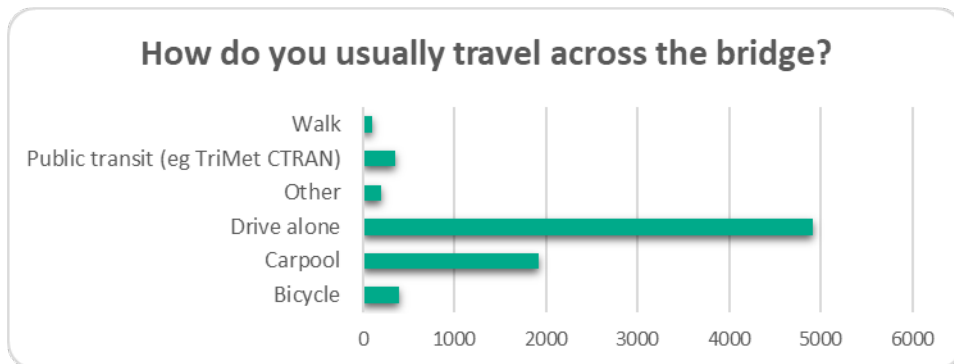


Figure 5. Survey Participant Demographics: Travel Mode



Respondents were prompted to voluntarily provide demographic information. Of those who identified their race, 72% identified as white/Caucasian, while 20% identified as not white alone (non-white)<sup>2</sup> and 8% identified as “other.” Among the non-white participants, the largest portion selected was Asian (26%), followed by Hispanic/Latino (25%) and African American/Black (16%). Census data indicate that the program area is 71% white/Caucasian, suggesting that the percentage of white survey participants is generally proportional to those living in the program area. However, because 8% selected “other” for their race and around 2,700 people did not respond to this question, survey respondents are not definitively representative of the program area with regards to race.

<sup>2</sup>The following options for race were provided on the survey: African, African American/Black, Asian, Slavic, American Indian/Alaska Native, Middle Eastern, White/Caucasian Hispanic or Latino(a)/Latinx, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, and Other. The percentage of not white alone survey respondents includes those who identify as any race except White/Caucasian and Other.

Most respondents who provided their age are between 26 and 60 years old. Among those, most participants (37%) are between the ages of 41 and 60. Only 6% of participants indicated they are under age 25, while 23% of the community members in the program area are under the age of 25; this suggests a need to reach more youth voices to be more reflective of broader community demographics. Around 3,000 people did not respond to the question about age.

Of those who provided their household income, most (38%) make more than \$100,000, followed by 19% making \$50,000 to \$74,999 and 18% making \$75,000 to \$99,999. The program area median household income is \$63,912, indicating a need to reach additional middle-lower income residents to be more reflective of broader community demographics. More than 3,500 respondents did not provide their income.

Figure 6, Figure 7 and Figure 8 show age, race and income demographic data.

Figure 6. Survey Participant Demographics: Age

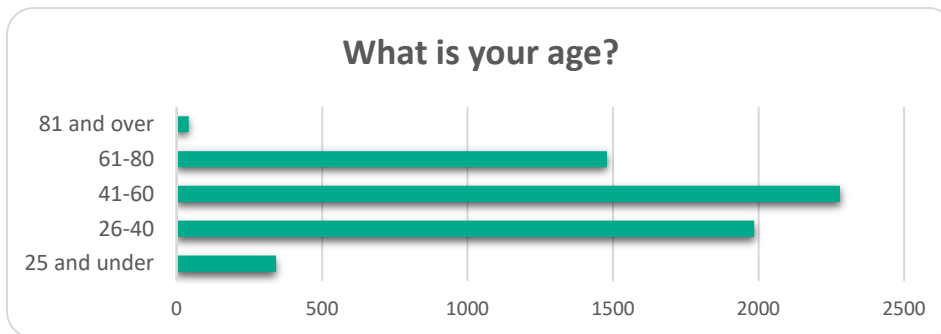


Figure 7. Survey Participant Demographics: Race

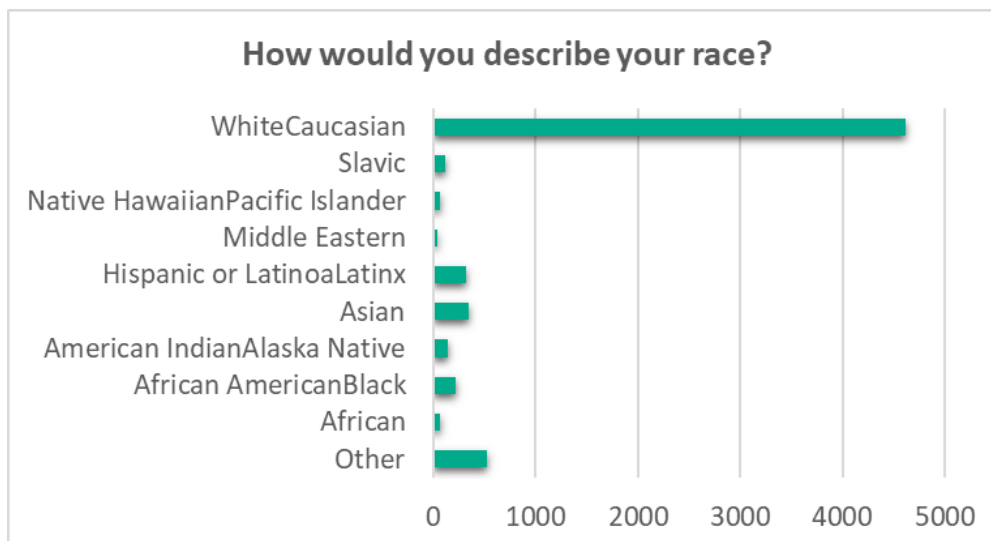
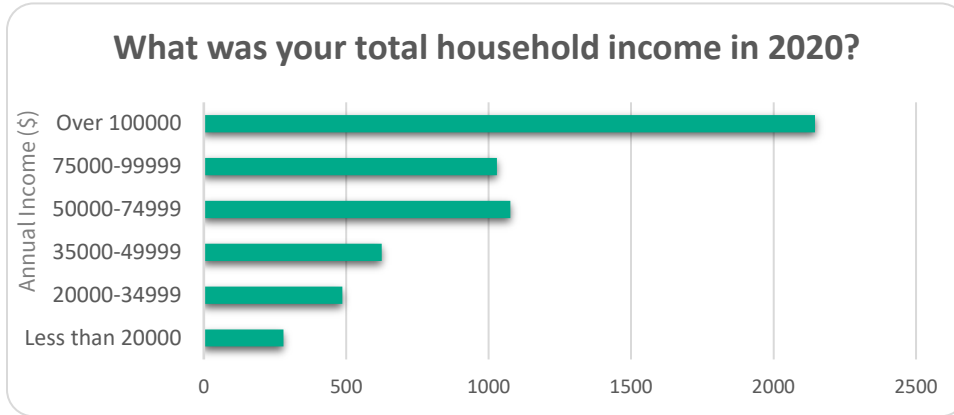


Figure 8. Survey Participant Demographics: Annual Household Income



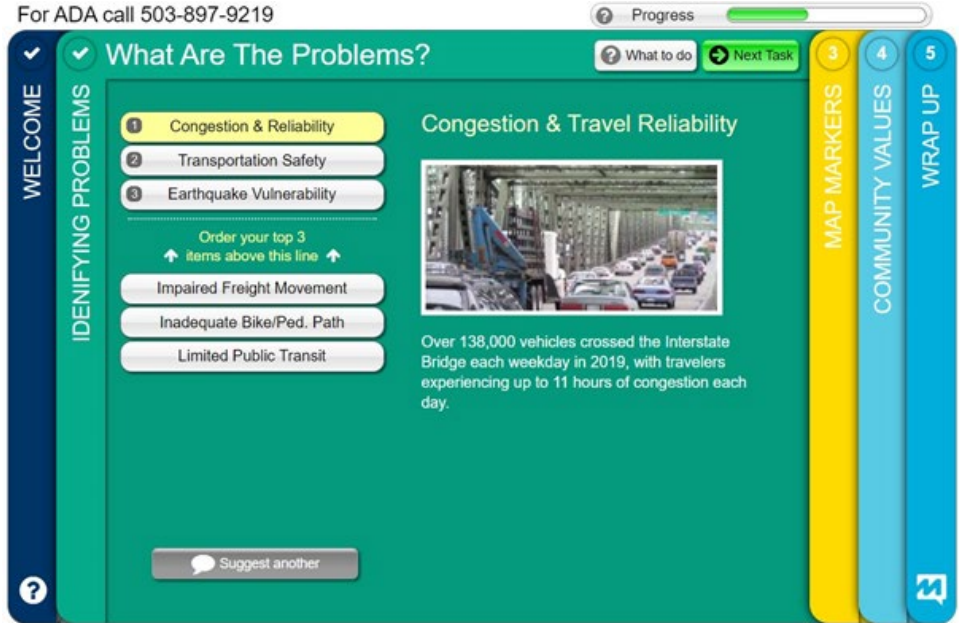
To supplement the survey responses received from youth voices and communities of concern, the program held targeted listening sessions as an additional avenue to gather feedback from these community members. The findings from the listening sessions are covered in Section 4.10.

### 4.3.3 Activity 1: Identifying Problems

In Activity 1, respondents were asked to rank their top three transportation problems in the program area, based on the six transportation problems identified in previous planning work (see Figure 9):

- Congestion and reliability
- Transportation safety
- Earthquake vulnerability
- Impaired freight movement
- Inadequate bike/pedestrian path
- Limited public transit

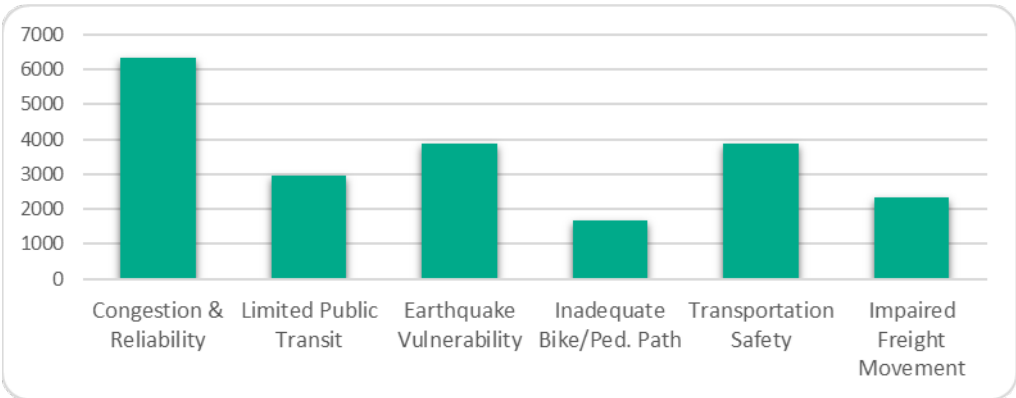
Figure 9. Activity 1: Identifying Problems Survey Screen



Participants were also given the opportunity to suggest other problems that may be missing from the list (optional).

Participants reaffirmed that all six problems still exist, prioritizing congestion and reliability (first), transportation safety (second), and earthquake vulnerability (third). The number of times each problem was ranked in the top three are displayed in Figure 10.

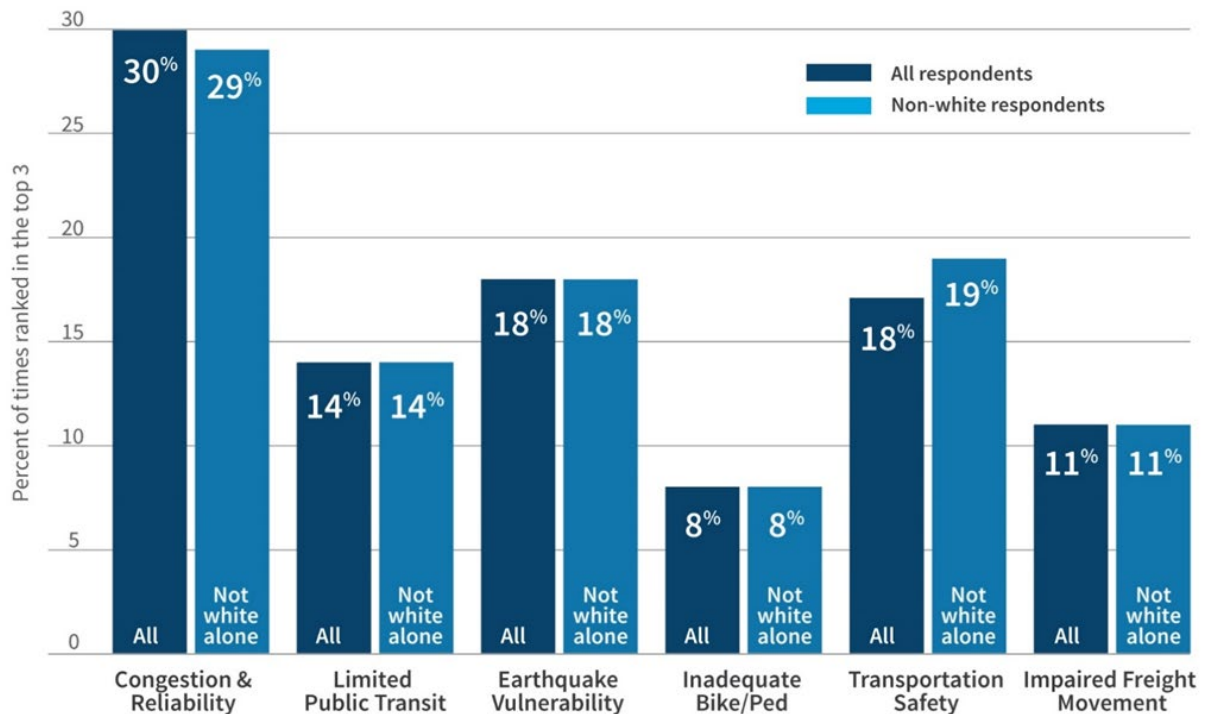
Figure 10. Transportation Problems: Number of Times Ranked in the Top Three



In an effort to understand priorities for communities of color, the program looked at responses by those who identify as any race besides white/Caucasian. These results were then compared to the results from all survey respondents. The findings show that priorities for non-white respondents were almost identical to the larger group, with one minor exception: non-white respondents ranked

transportation safety slightly (1%) higher relative to all participants and congestion and reliability slightly (1%) lower relative to all participants. Figure 11 displays the comparison of all respondents and non-white respondents.

Figure 11. Top Transportation Problems for all Participants and Non-White Participants



\* Respondents could select multiple options for race. "Not white alone" includes all respondents who selected African, African American/Black, Asian, Slavic, American Indian/Alaska Native, Middle Eastern, Hispanic or Latino(a)/Latinx, and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander

The following information shows this comparison more precisely.

Respondents who identified as non-white ranked the problems in the following order:

1. Congestion and reliability (713 or 29%)
2. Transportation safety (478 or 19%)
3. Earthquake vulnerability (438 or 18%)
4. Limited public transit (351 or 14%)
5. Impaired freight movement (279 or 11%)

6. Inadequate bike/pedestrian path (201 or 8%)<sup>3</sup>

All survey respondents ranked the problems in the following order:

1. Congestion and reliability (6,337 or 30%)
2. Transportation safety (3,896 or 18%)
3. Earthquake vulnerability (3,878 or 18%)
4. Limited public transit (2,954 or 14%)
5. Impaired freight movement (2,354 or 11%)
6. Inadequate bike/pedestrian path (1,679 or 8%)<sup>4</sup>

#### 4.3.4 Activity 2: Map Markers

Activity 2: Map Markers asked respondents to drop a categorized marker where they experience a transportation challenge (see Figure 12). The pin categories included:

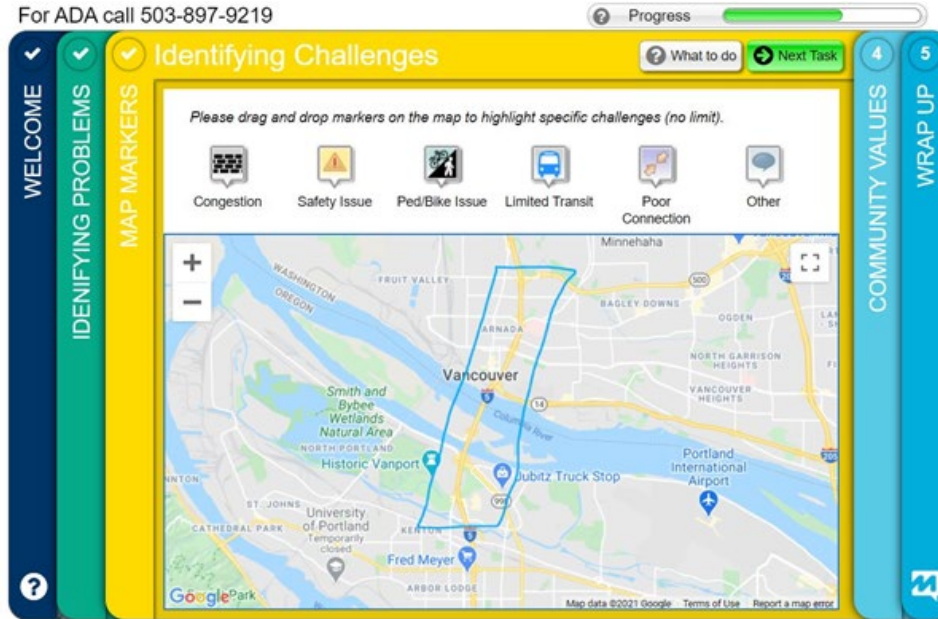
- Congestion
- Safety
- Pedestrian/bicycle
- Limited transit
- Poor connection
- Other

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<sup>3</sup> The percentages are rounded and therefore do not add to 100%.

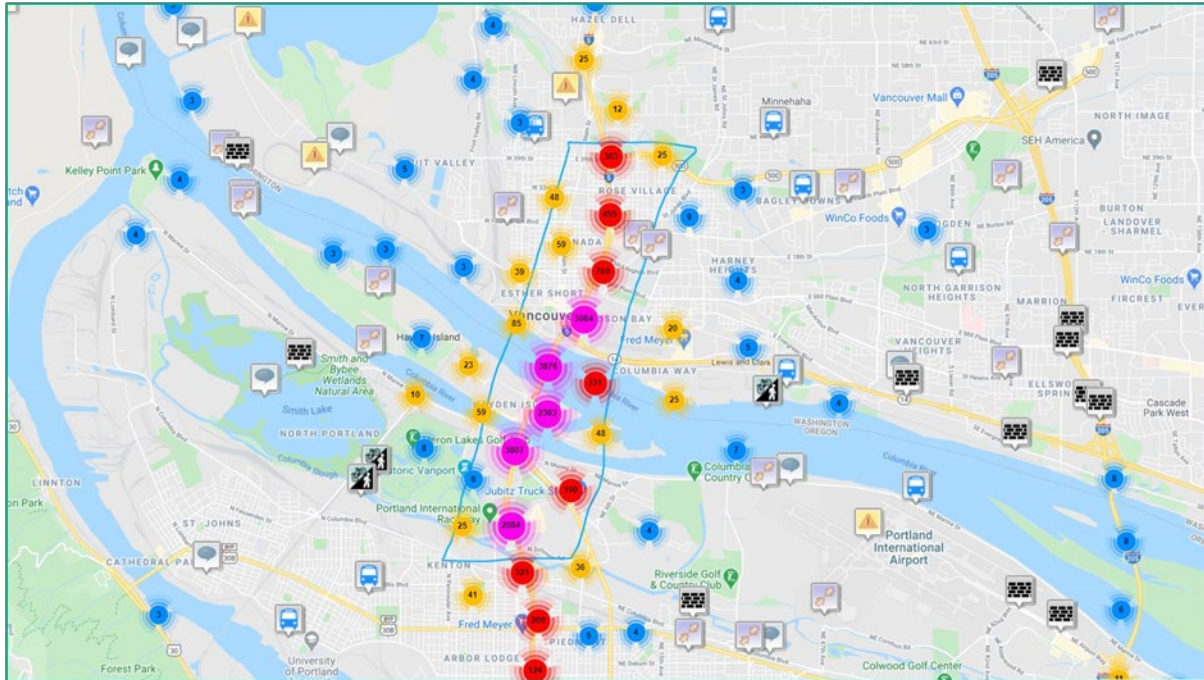
<sup>4</sup> The percentages are rounded and therefore do not add to 100%.

Figure 12. Activity 2: Map Markers Survey Screen



Approximately 20,000 markers were placed, with 8,374 of those including a comment. The colors on the map in Figure 13 denote the quantity of markers dropped in any particular location, with pink showing around 3,000 markers dropped around each dot, red showing areas with hundreds of markers placed, yellow showing areas with between 10 and 100 markers, and blue showing areas with less than 10 markers.

Figure 13. Map Markers Activity Results from all Survey Participants



The problem categories were ranked as follows:

1. **Congestion** was the highest category of concern, chosen more than half of the time  
10,450 markers (53%) and 3,413 comments
2. **Safety** was the second most concerning problem identified  
2,884 markers (15%) and 1,644 comments
3. **Bike and Pedestrian** was the third highest category of concern  
2,202 markers (11%) and 1,103 comments
4. **Limited Transit** was identified as a problem comparable to bike and pedestrian concerns  
2,072 markers (11%) and 1,084 comments
5. **Poor Connection** markers were used fewer than any category besides the “other” marker  
1,571 markers (8%) and 701 comments
6. **Other** markers were used the least but almost always contained a comment  
460 markers (2%) and 416 comments

An online [interactive map](#) is available to explore the comments in detail. Table 1 shows the topics most frequently mentioned in the comments for each category. The program will continue to examine the comments provided with the markers to help inform the development of design options.



Table 1. Activity 2: Map Markers Open-Ended Comment Topics

Category	Frequently Mentioned Topics <sup>1</sup>
Congestion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inadequate merging</li> <li>• On/off-ramps</li> <li>• Bridge lifts</li> <li>• Not enough lanes</li> <li>• Grade/sight concerns</li> <li>• Bottlenecks/backups at north and south ends</li> </ul>
Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Concerns related to houseless communities</li> <li>• Inadequate merging</li> <li>• Narrow lanes</li> <li>• Dangerous on/off-ramps</li> <li>• Lack of lighting</li> <li>• Congestion</li> <li>• No shoulders</li> <li>• Grade/sight concerns</li> </ul>
Bike and Pedestrian	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Difficult to navigate by bike, especially in North Portland</li> <li>• Houseless encampments making the North Portland program area unsafe</li> <li>• The multi-use path being navigationally confusing and having poor (or no) markings to indicate entrance and exit points</li> <li>• The multi-use path being generally unsafe</li> <li>• The bridge itself is narrow and dangerous and not suited to support both bikes and pedestrians</li> </ul>
Limited Transit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Better transit service decreasing congestion</li> <li>• The need for more transit options</li> <li>• Preference for light rail or a dedicated transit lane</li> </ul>
Poor Connection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unsafe merging</li> <li>• On/off-ramps being too short</li> </ul>

Category	Frequently Mentioned Topics <sup>1</sup>
Other	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Earthquake/seismic</li> <li>• Climate and air quality</li> <li>• Tolling</li> <li>• Flex lanes</li> <li>• Narrow lanes</li> </ul>

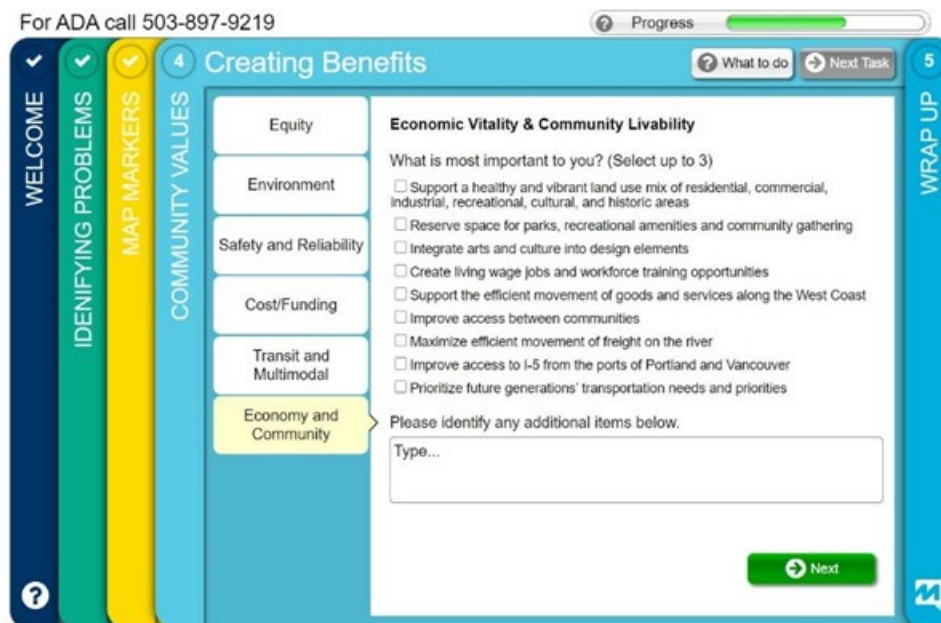
1 The order in which the topics are listed has no significance (i.e., the list is not hierarchical).

### 4.3.5 Activity 3: Community Values

In the final activity, respondents were asked to identify community values that are most important to them within six categories. The program relied on previous planning work and input from our partner agencies to develop values categories (see Figure 14):

- Equity
- Environment
- Safety and travel reliability
- Cost and funding considerations
- Public transit and multimodal transportation choices
- Economic vitality and community livability

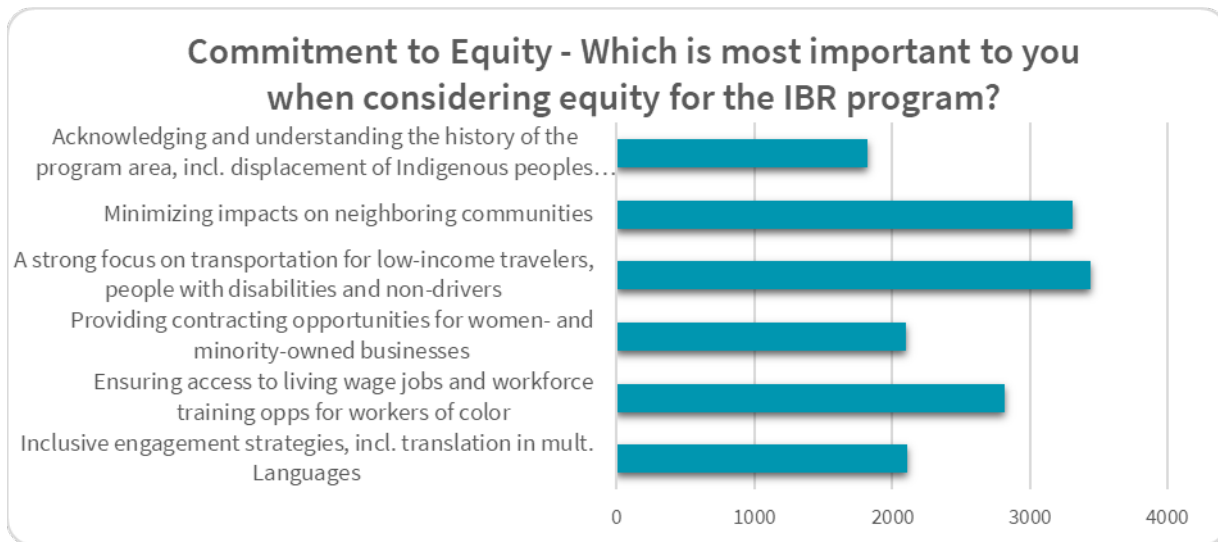
Figure 14. Activity 3: Community Values Survey Screen



Respondents were also given the opportunity to suggest other values not listed (optional).

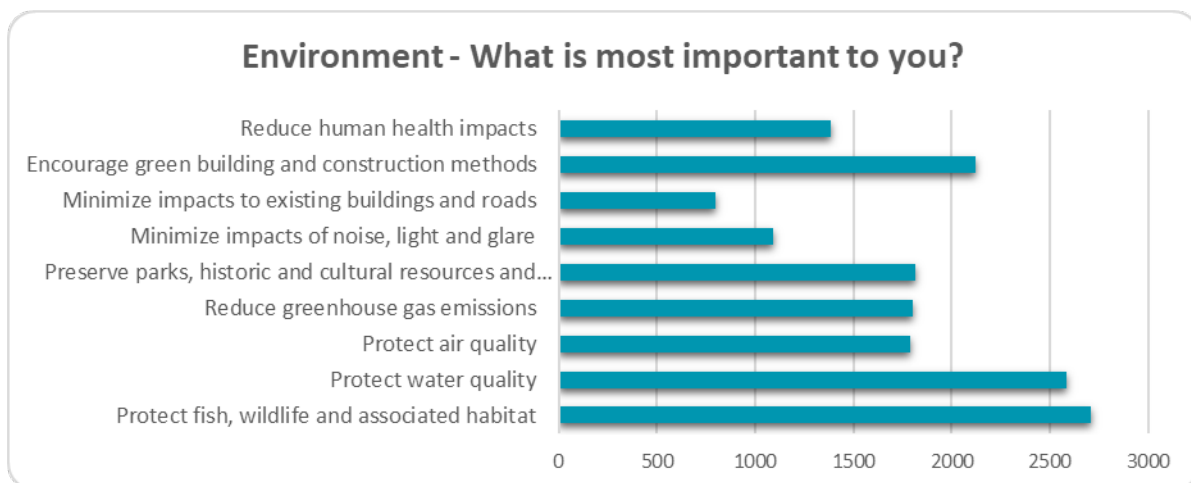
Respondents indicated that all values in the equity category are important, although minimizing impacts to neighborhood communities and focusing on transportation options for low-income travelers, people with disabilities, and non-drivers stood out as key priorities for the program (see Figure 15).

Figure 15. Activity 3 Results: Commitment to Equity Values



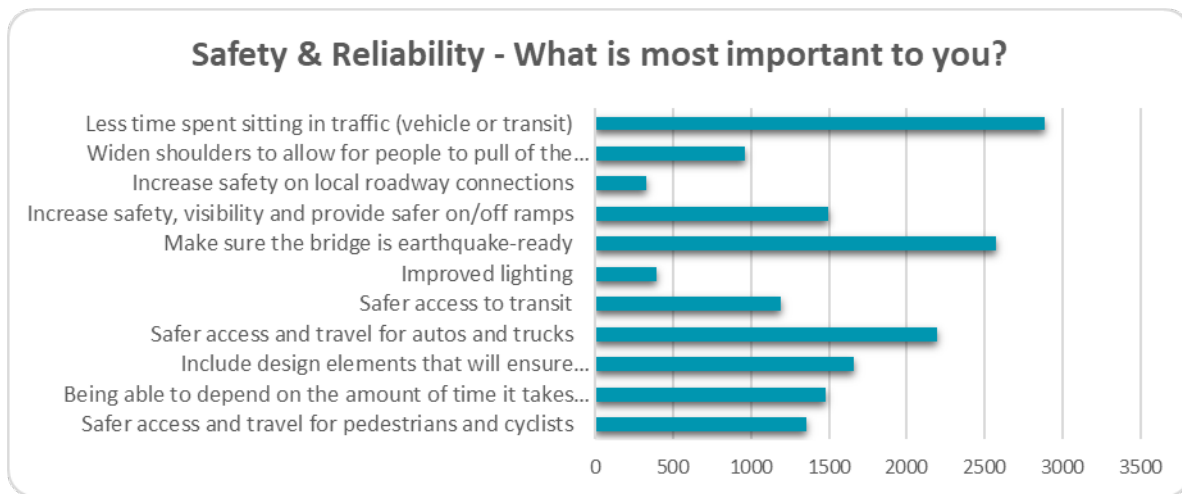
Within the environment category, participants identified protecting fish, wildlife, and associated habitats and protecting water quality as the most important values for the program to consider. Encouraging green building and construction methods also ranked high (see Figure 16).

Figure 16. Activity 3 Results: Environmental Values



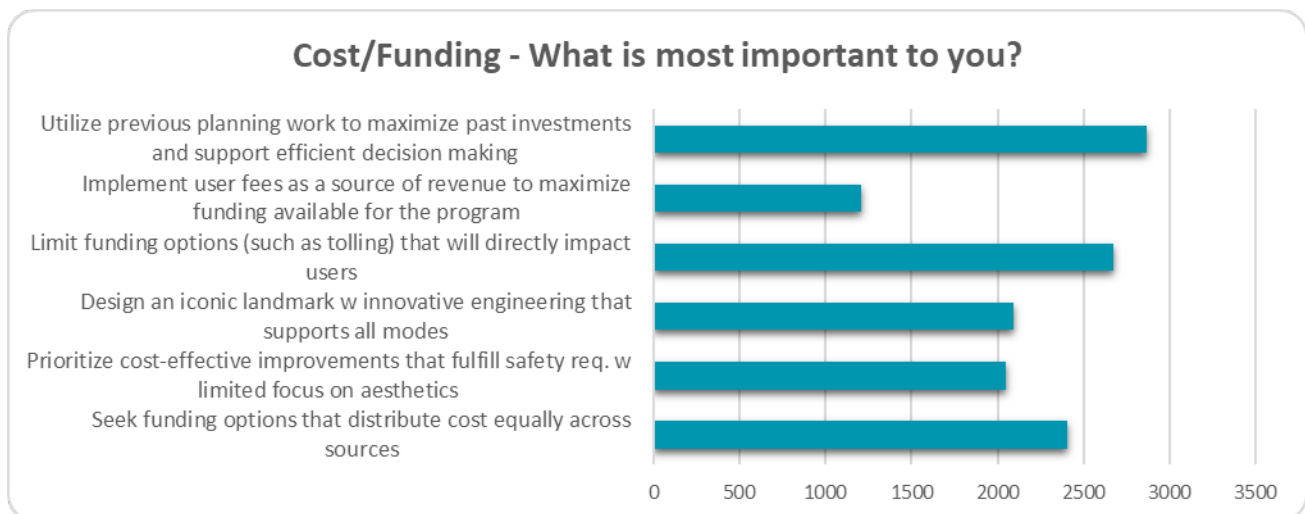
When asked to consider safety and reliability, respondents reiterated the importance of spending less time in traffic (in a personal vehicle or on transit) and ensuring the replacement bridge is earthquake-ready (see Figure 17).

Figure 17. Activity 3 Results: Safety and Reliability Values



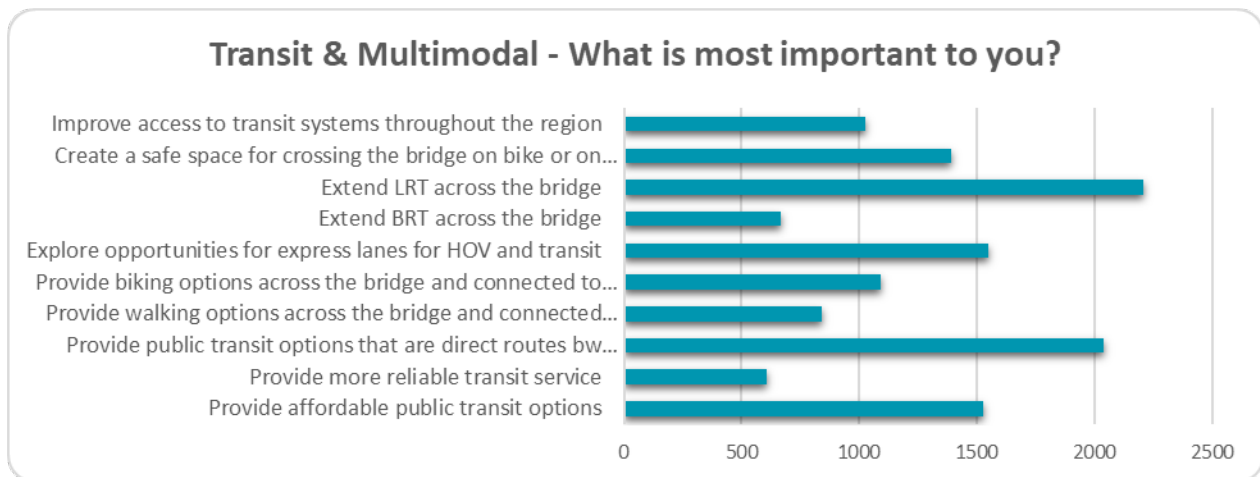
In the cost/funding category, respondents reiterated the importance of using previous planning work to maximize past investments and support efficient decision-making as their top priority. Respondents also expressed support for limiting funding options (such as tolling) that will directly impact users (see Figure 18).

Figure 18. Activity 3 Results: Cost and Funding Values



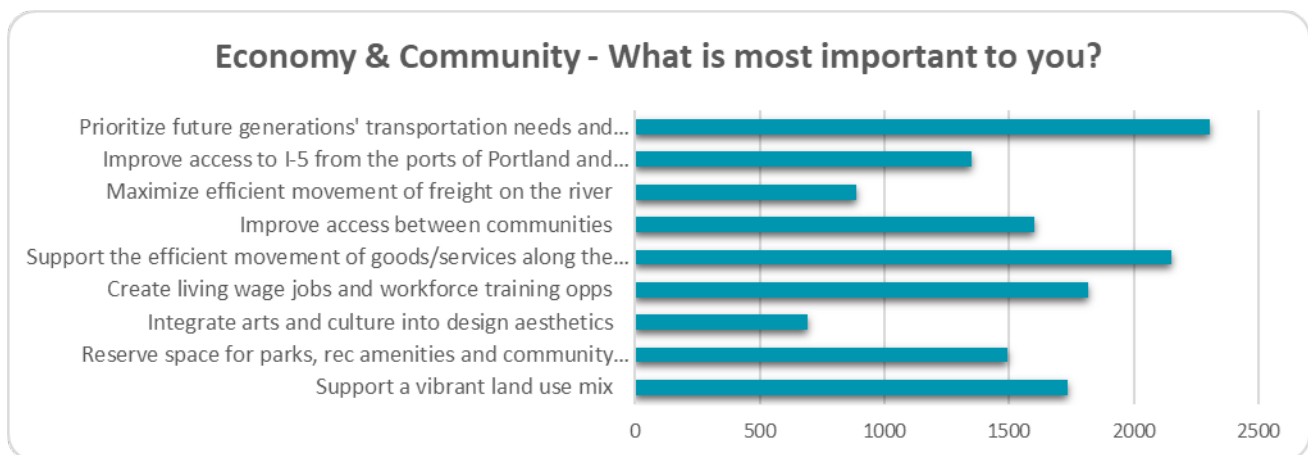
The transit and multimodal category results show strong support for high-capacity transit (HCT), particularly for extending light rail transit across the bridge and more generally providing public transit that is a direct connection between Portland and Vancouver (see Figure 19).

Figure 19. Activity 3 Results: Transit and Multimodal Values



In the final category of economy and community, respondents identified prioritizing future generations’ transportation needs and freight movement as the two most important values (see Figure 20).

Figure 20. Activity 3 Results: Economy and Community Values



## 4.4 Open-Ended Survey Comment Summary

The program received 5,646 open-ended comments through Activity 1: Identifying Problems and Activity 3: Community Values. While the comment prompts were centered on transportation problems (Activity 1) and community values (Activity 3), comments received are also relevant to design options,

program process and construction. For the purpose of this report, these comments were analyzed and grouped to provide a high-level overview by topic. The program will further review the feedback received from these comments to inform program work as the corresponding subject matter is considered.

#### 4.4.1 Key Takeaways and Themes

Key takeaways and themes from each identified comment category include the following:

- **Congestion and reliability:** Across all open-ended comment prompts, respondents mentioned congestion and reliability concerns. Survey participants clearly expressed that they value their time and believe the program should prioritize congestion and reliability.
- **Public transit:** Public transit was a contentious topic among respondents without a clear conclusion. Some support HCT across the Interstate Bridge, while others do not. Respondents also raised concerns about a perceived lack of adequate bus service and incentives for carpooling and transit.
- **Active mobility, including pedestrian and bicycle:** Relative to other categories, minimal comments on pedestrian and bicycle needs were received. In general, respondents expressed the need to increase safe options and a desire for the program to plan for all modes of transportation.
- **Transportation safety:** The program received comments about transportation safety for all modes, although comments about safety for drivers was the most frequent. These responses identified specific issues for drivers on and around the bridge.
- **Seismic (earthquake) resiliency:** Respondents emphasized that any bridge replacement option should be designed and built to modern seismic standards to minimize loss of life and connectivity issues in the wake of a major earthquake.
- **Freight movement:** Comments on freight movement were mixed, with some respondents suggesting specific examples on how to improve freight movement, while others indicated they do not think the program should prioritize freight movement for a variety of reasons.
- **Design and aesthetics:** Building a third bridge ranked high in respondents' suggestions for a replacement bridge as did the suggestion to build a tunnel. Respondents differed in opinions about prioritizing aesthetics versus function.
- **Cost and funding:** Respondents commented on three major themes: fairness, tolling and financial impact. Comments under this category were passionate and detailed.
- **Climate and environment:** Respondents emphasized the values ranked under the environment category. They also expanded on suggestions about how the program can address climate change.
- **Equity:** Respondents prioritized minimizing program-related impacts on neighboring communities while focusing on transportation needs of low-income travelers, people with disabilities, and non-drivers. Some do not see a connection between the program and equity. In response, the program will need to translate equity concepts into concrete processes and

outcomes. Much of this work is expected to take place in tandem with the EAG as it develops a program-specific definition of equity and an equity framework to help guide how equity is put into operation.

#### 4.4.2 Congestion and Reliability

Respondents shared concerns about the effects of congestion on the economy, environment and livability. They noted concerns about how congestion slows down freight traffic, increases greenhouse gas emissions, and results in people spending too much time sitting in traffic.

Congestion was also tied to safety with comments noting that crashes on the Interstate Bridge cause travel delays during non-peak

travel times and exacerbate peak travel delays. The program also heard concerns about traffic bottlenecks outside the program area affecting travelers on the Interstate Bridge.

Throughout the survey, comments often focused on solutions or design options. The program received suggestions to reduce congestion and improve travel reliability by:

- Adding more lanes.
- Implementing tolling and congestion pricing.
- Adding high-occupancy vehicle lanes.
- Improving transit options.
- Building other river crossings or bypass freeways.
- Building a new bridge without a bridge lift.
- Improving the highway and interchange design.

#### 4.4.3 Public Transit

Respondents expressed strong opinions both in support of and against extending light rail across the Interstate Bridge. There was strong support for increasing buses and other low-cost transit options either in lieu of or in addition to some form of HCT. Respondents also shared ideas about different types of transit, such as

ferry, high speed rail and monorail. Other ideas included creating a dedicated lane for buses and HCT, using transit in a tunnel under the river, and creating a separate transit-only bridge.

"Time is people's most valuable commodity, regardless of race, color, or any other minority factor. Work to improve traffic congestion and ALL residents will benefit equally!"

- Participant comment

"Dedicated frequent transit service across the bridge is key in my mind. I am agnostic if it's a dedicated bus lane or light rail."

- Participant comment

#### 4.4.4 Active Mobility, Including Pedestrian and Bicycle

In general, respondents focused on the need for the program to incorporate multimodal solutions in planning for and designing the replacement bridge. The few respondents who focused on pedestrian and bicycle needs emphasized a need for safer paths and better connections. They also commented on the

design of pedestrian and bicycle facilities on and near the Interstate Bridge. The program received suggestions on how to build safer multi-use paths including wider lanes, separating bicycles and pedestrians, and separating bicyclists and pedestrians from all vehicles including transit.

"Improved bike, pedestrian, and transit connections between Portland and Vancouver."

- Participant comment

#### 4.4.5 Transportation Safety

Respondents emphasized prioritizing safety for all types of travelers whether they walk, bike, drive or ride public transit. Specific to drivers, respondents identified transportation safety needs resulting from on/off-ramps and merges and other congestion-related issues. Other issues mentioned by respondents include:

- Limited line of sight.
- Crashes resulting from bridge lifts and narrow lanes.
- Lack of adequate lighting and signage.
- Lack of pullouts for disabled or stalled vehicles.
- Too many on/off-ramps in a short span.

"Traffic gets backed up because of unsafe merges. And crashes happen when [vehicles are] traveling too fast."

- Participant comment

#### 4.4.6 Seismic (Earthquake) Resiliency

Many respondents expressed support for a seismically resilient bridge. Most consider seismic resiliency a baseline, non-negotiable need for the program to address.

Respondents differed, however, on how seismic resiliency should be achieved. Some expressed support for retrofitting the existing Interstate Bridge, while others shared a broader vision of a new seismically resilient bridge. A few respondents expressed the need to research a tunnel option.

"I love all the options, but If we're not ready for an earthquake, everything else you [the survey] mentioned is just moving deck chairs on the Titanic."

- Participant comment



#### 4.4.7 Freight Movement

Numerous respondents did not think the program should prioritize freight for a variety of reasons including:

- The region should be decreasing its reliance on freight.
- Tilikum Crossing in Portland over the Willamette River is preventing the Columbia River from carrying marine freight.
- Freight is being diverted to local ports rather than encouraging transport to the Port of Tacoma.

Others support the improved movement of freight and provided solution-oriented comments:

- Making the bridge higher so vessels can pass beneath without causing bridge lift congestion.
- Adding a second or third bridge exclusively for freight.
- Designating times for freight traffic.
- Dedicating freight-only lanes.
- Building alternate routes for truck freight.
- Expanding light rail to include rail freight.

“Freight should have an alternate route, separate from public transportation. Trucks are now too large for inner city traffic.”

- Participant comment

#### 4.4.8 Design and Aesthetics

Building a third bridge was a common suggestion within the design category including suggestions to build local bridges, multiple additional bridges, or a new bridge before replacing the Interstate Bridge. Several respondents suggested replacing the Interstate Bridge with a tunnel to increase marine vessel navigation and/or avoid impacts (visual and right-of-way) to land on either side of the river.

“Build a tunnel, not a bridge. This option reduces the impact on neighborhoods and conflicts between the United States Coast Guard, the Federal Aviation Association and industrial users (JOBS).”

- Participant comment

Many respondents also highlighted bridge aesthetics as a priority. While some respondents desire a bridge that prioritizes function over form, many others want an iconic or “stylish” bridge that blends in with the environment and offers locations for pedestrians to enjoy the view.

#### 4.4.9 Cost and Funding

The program received a great amount of feedback in the cost and funding category. Respondents focused on three key themes: fairness, tolling and financial impact.

When considering how to fund a replacement bridge, respondents shared sweeping concerns about what is “fair.” Opinions on cost were dramatically influenced by the respondents’ location and residency. Respondents frequently expressed a belief that they are disproportionately taxed or tolled relative to the other state, and they felt the other state/city should shoulder more of the program costs. However, respondents generally agree that the states should not be funding a federal project and that there should be equitable solutions to funding. Some suggested that costs should be distributed “fairly” among residents of both states.

Regarding tolling, many respondents expressed opposition. Widespread concerns were also shared about making tolls reasonably priced, ensuring tolls are not a financial burden, and considering equitable pricing for low-income and environmentally friendly users. Those in favor of tolling provided specific opinions on how to implement it on the Interstate Bridge (i.e., congestion/peak hour tolling, variable tolling). The most vocal supporters of tolling were in favor of a toll for single-occupancy vehicles (SOV) and congestion pricing. Some of these respondents stipulated the extent of their support for tolling (i.e., stop once construction is complete, provide discounts or exemptions for low-income travelers).

“Costly tolls make bridge crossings inaccessible to many and should be avoided.”

- Participant comment

In terms of financial impacts, respondents are generally opposed to the program using a funding mechanism that imposes a financial burden. Some comments suggested placing the cost burden on corporations or the federal government. Respondents expressed concerns and ideas regarding:

- The possibility of increasing taxes.
- Implementing exorbitant tolling fees.
- The need to use taxpayer funds wisely.
- The desire to build a cost-effective bridge.
- Prioritizing function over costly aesthetic design.

#### 4.4.10 Climate and Environment

Key concerns from respondents include poor air quality, pollution and the need to reduce SOVs. Respondents frequently linked climate change to the emissions induced by traffic congestion and the continued reliance on SOVs.

“Future generations will not want a bridge designed for SOVs. They want a planet that will not kill them.”

- Participant comment

Suggested solutions include using sustainable building materials, installing wind turbines and other alternative energy sources, incentivizing the use of electric vehicles, and planning for alternate energy sources being widely available in future transit and personal vehicles.

### 4.4.11 Equity

The most common equity-related topic among respondents was concerns about the potential impacts of tolling on low-income drivers. Other respondents encourage the program to not just talk about equity, but to take action by empowering communities of concern in the program's decision-making process.

Respondents also emphasized the importance of transparency throughout the program. Some mentioned the need for public transit and an

accessible, multimodal design. Recommendations also suggested focusing on environmental impacts to communities of concern and reinvesting in local businesses and organizations.

A significant number of respondents expressed disagreement with the program's commitment to centering equity.

“If there was better public transit in this region the disabled and non-drivers could have access to more job sites. Lack of public transit has made it impossible for me to apply for many jobs because I couldn't get there.”

- Participant comment

### 4.4.12 Other

Fewer than 20 comments were received stating that there were no problems that should be addressed by the program. The majority of uncategorizable comments were negative, expressing that there is either no problem with the current bridge or that new bridges should not be built. Other negative opinions focused on the prevention of certain populations from crossing the river.

## 4.5 Community Briefings

Four virtual community briefings were held between February 18 and February 25, 2021, on an interactive video platform and livestreamed on YouTube. Live audience participation was incorporated to gather input from participants on key program elements through the video platform. Three sessions were hosted in English, with both English and Spanish subtitles. One event was hosted exclusively in Spanish including Spanish subtitles. Subject matter experts reviewed the program and leadership structure, reasons why the Interstate Bridge needs replacing, federal environmental review process, role of the advisory groups, and community engagement activities. The briefings closed with a call-to-action for participants to visit the online open house and to take the interactive survey.

Frequently asked questions were also incorporated into the community briefings to address some of the common topics of interest and reinforce the program's commitment to transparency. These included questions regarding tolling, building a third bridge, and who is responsible for decision-making.

### 4.5.1 Key Takeaways and Themes

Approximately 195 participants attended the live community briefings. Since these events were posted on YouTube, more than 200 additional viewers have watched the events. Three themes emerged from the interactive audience participation:

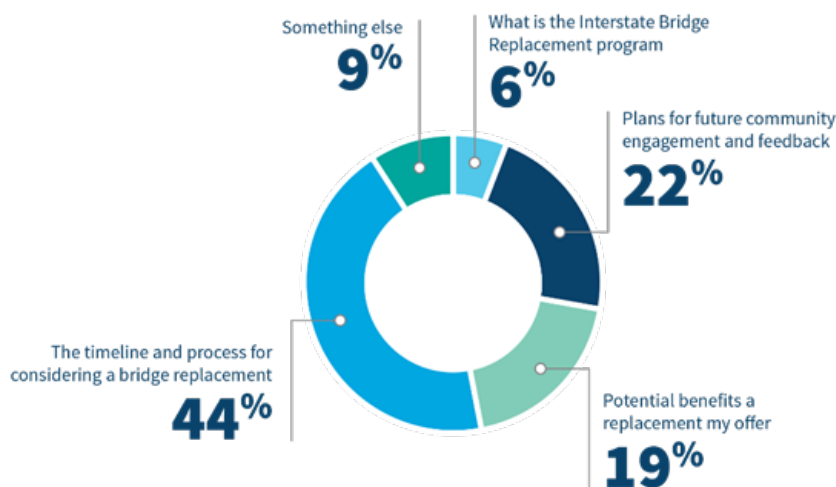
- Participants are most interested in learning about the program’s process.
- Congestion and reliability are the problems community members experience most in the program area.
- Community members would like to see additional in-person or virtual events in the future.

### 4.5.2 What We Heard

Interactive audience participation questions were used to engage attendees and solicit feedback regarding the program. Periodically during the event, audience members were prompted to respond to questions presented on their screens. The combined results of the responses received are highlighted in the following graphics.

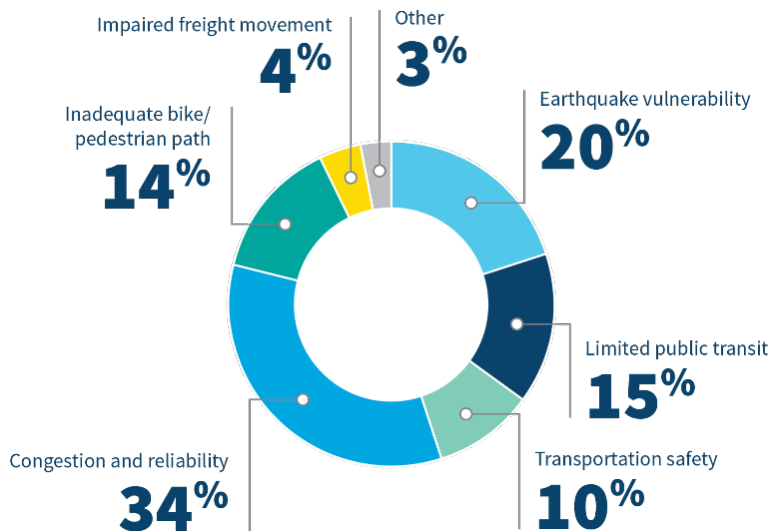
1. The first audience participation question asked, "What are you most interested in learning about in today’s presentation?" Across all four briefings, most (44%) were interested in the timeline and process for considering a replacement bridge, followed by plans for future community engagement and feedback (22%), and the potential benefits a replacement may offer (19%).

Figure 21. Community Briefing Results: Interests



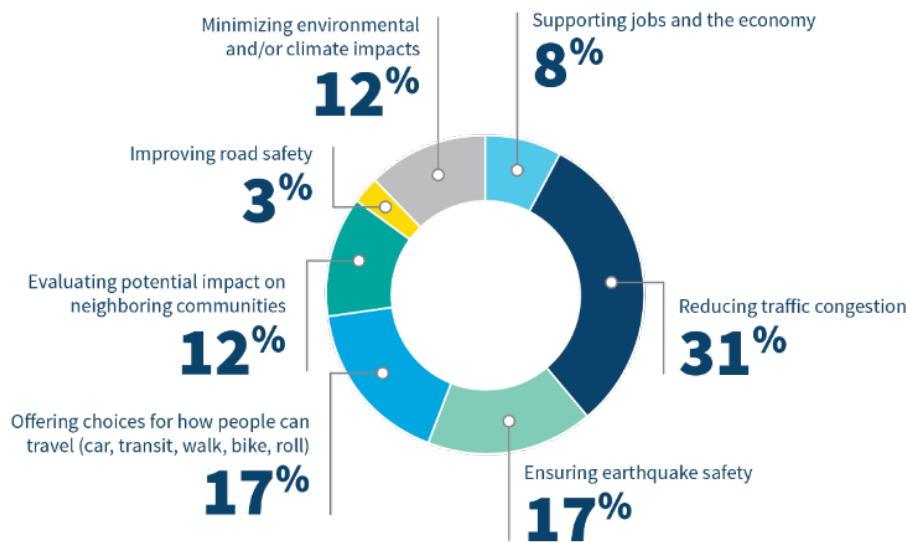
- The second question asked, “What are the problems you experience with the Interstate Bridge?” Most (34%) ranked congestion and reliability as the top problem:

Figure 22. Community Briefing Results: Top Problems Priorities



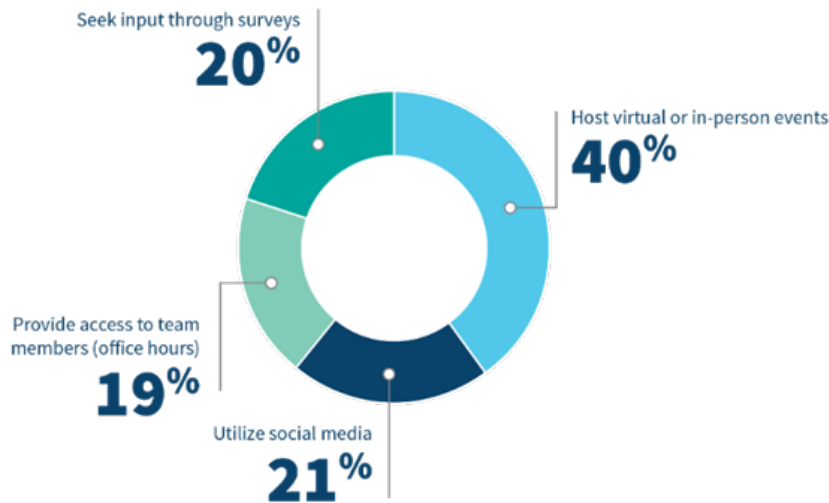
- The third question asked, “Which of the following do you view as an important priority to address as we consider options for the Interstate Bridge?” Most (31%) identified reducing traffic congestion as the most important priority:

Figure 23. Community Briefings Results: Program Priorities



- The fourth audience participation question asked, “How do we meet our community where they are and listen to what is important?” Most (40%) recommended the program host virtual or in-person events.

Figure 24. Community Briefing Results: Engagement Priorities



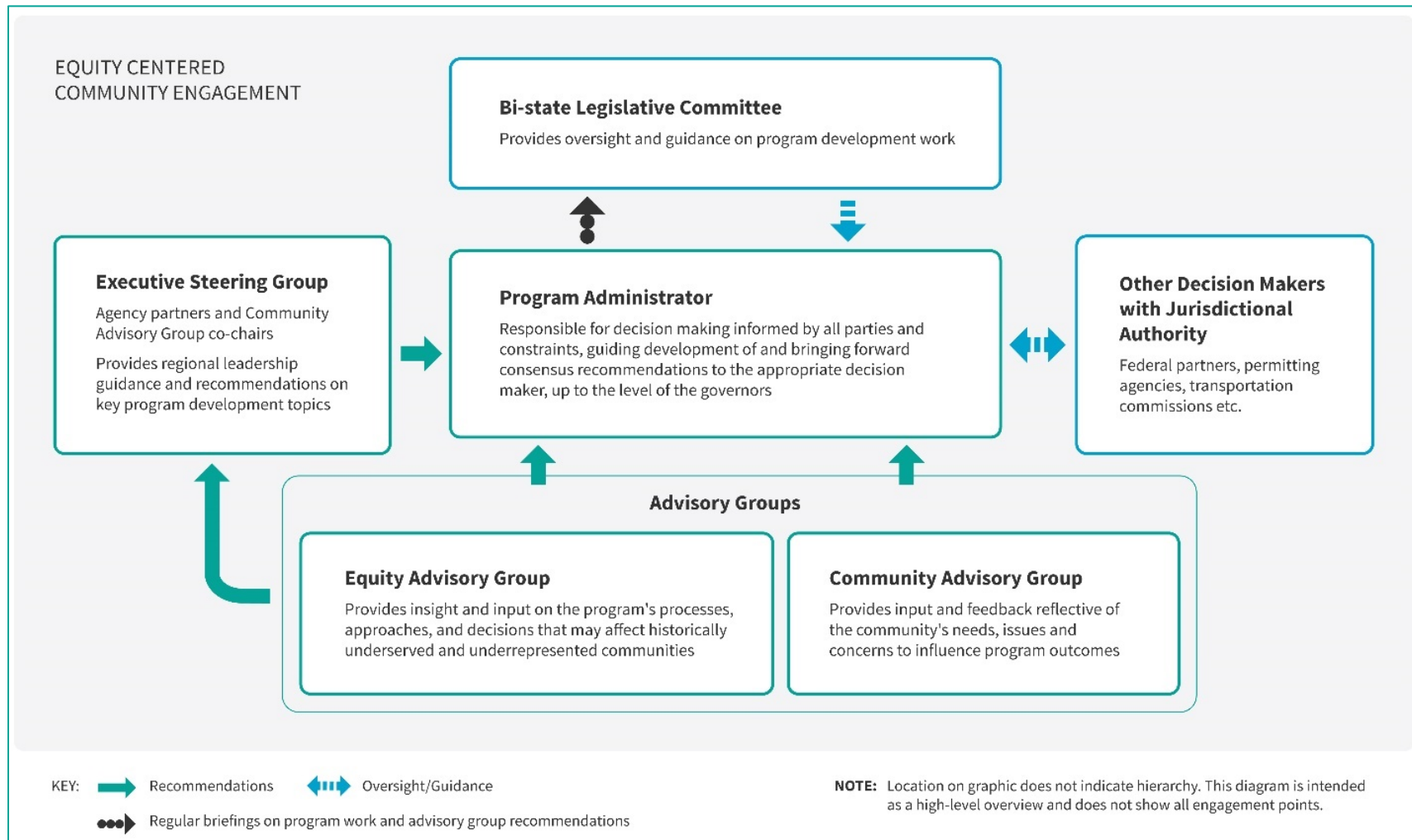
## 4.6 Advisory Groups

To help ensure the program develops a bridge replacement solution that best serves the complex needs of communities in Washington and Oregon and fosters broad regional support, the program has formed three advisory groups to provide feedback and recommendations: the Executive Steering Group, CAG and EAG. All three groups have balanced representation from Oregon and Washington.

The CAG and EAG are specifically focused on representing the community; their membership includes community members who were selected through an open application process, as well as appointed representatives of community-based organizations. EAG membership also includes equity-focused staff from each program partner agency.

Figure 25 illustrates how the advisory groups provide recommendations and guidance to help shape program outcomes.

Figure 25. Advisory Groups’ Decision-Making and Recommendations



### 4.6.1 Community Advisory Group

The program gathered CAG member input on transportation problems they experience with the Interstate Bridge and the community priorities and values that should help shape the program. CAG members provided feedback through multiple outlets including the interactive survey (they were given a specific link for the survey), virtual breakout room discussions, live surveys during CAG meetings, and follow-up email communications.

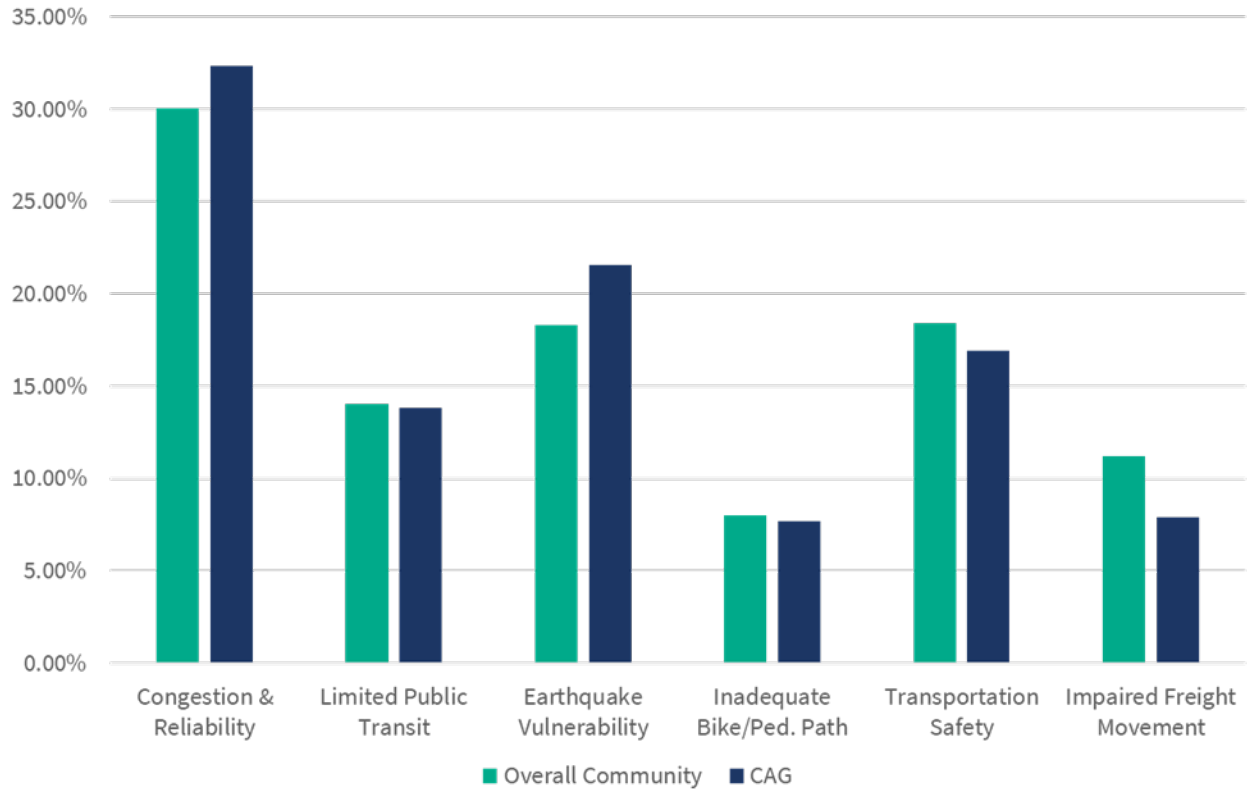
During the February 24 CAG meeting, members ranked their top three problems in the program area, ranked their most important community values, and discussed problems and values in a small group exercise. During the March 10 CAG meeting, members discussed previously identified community values and shared their perspectives regarding values they want the program to consider.

#### Key Takeaways and Themes

CAG members were asked to complete the interactive survey via a specific survey link. Figure 26 compares the responses for all survey respondents and CAG members for Activity 1: Identifying Problems. This comparison shows that the top problems the CAG experiences in the program area are very similar to the top problems all survey respondents experience, indicating the CAG is reflective of the broader community.



Figure 26. Top Transportation Problems for all Participants and CAG Members



CAG member input about the priorities for addressing transportation problems yielded the following three themes:

1. Growing travel demand and congestion is the problem the program most needs to address. "Build something sustainable that is going to do what we need it to do, very long into the future."
2. Prioritize designing a program that meets future community needs. - CAG member
3. Earthquake vulnerability is the second most critical problem the program needs to address.

CAG input regarding community values yielded the following three themes:

1. Mobility, reliability, accessibility, congestion reduction and efficiency are the greatest community values staff should prioritize through program development. "We all realize, the best bridge is the one that gets built. It really doesn't matter whether it's beautiful, elegant, modern. If it gets built, that's the bridge we want."
- 2.
3. - CAG member

2. Cost effectiveness and financial resources is the second highest value the program should prioritize through program development.
3. Within these values, the following elements should be prioritized: modal choice, equity, quality of life, stewardship of the environment and people, and safety.

### What We Heard

During the February 24 CAG meeting, members were prompted to take a live survey to rank their top two transportation problems for the program. This survey yielded the following results:

1. Growing travel demand and congestion (39%)
2. Seismic vulnerability (29%)
3. Growing demand for more public transportation options (14%)
4. Impaired freight movement (7%)
5. Substandard bicycle and pedestrian facilities (7%)
6. Safety and vulnerability to incidents (4%)

A similar live survey was presented during the same meeting to identify the two values most important to CAG members. The survey yielded the following results:

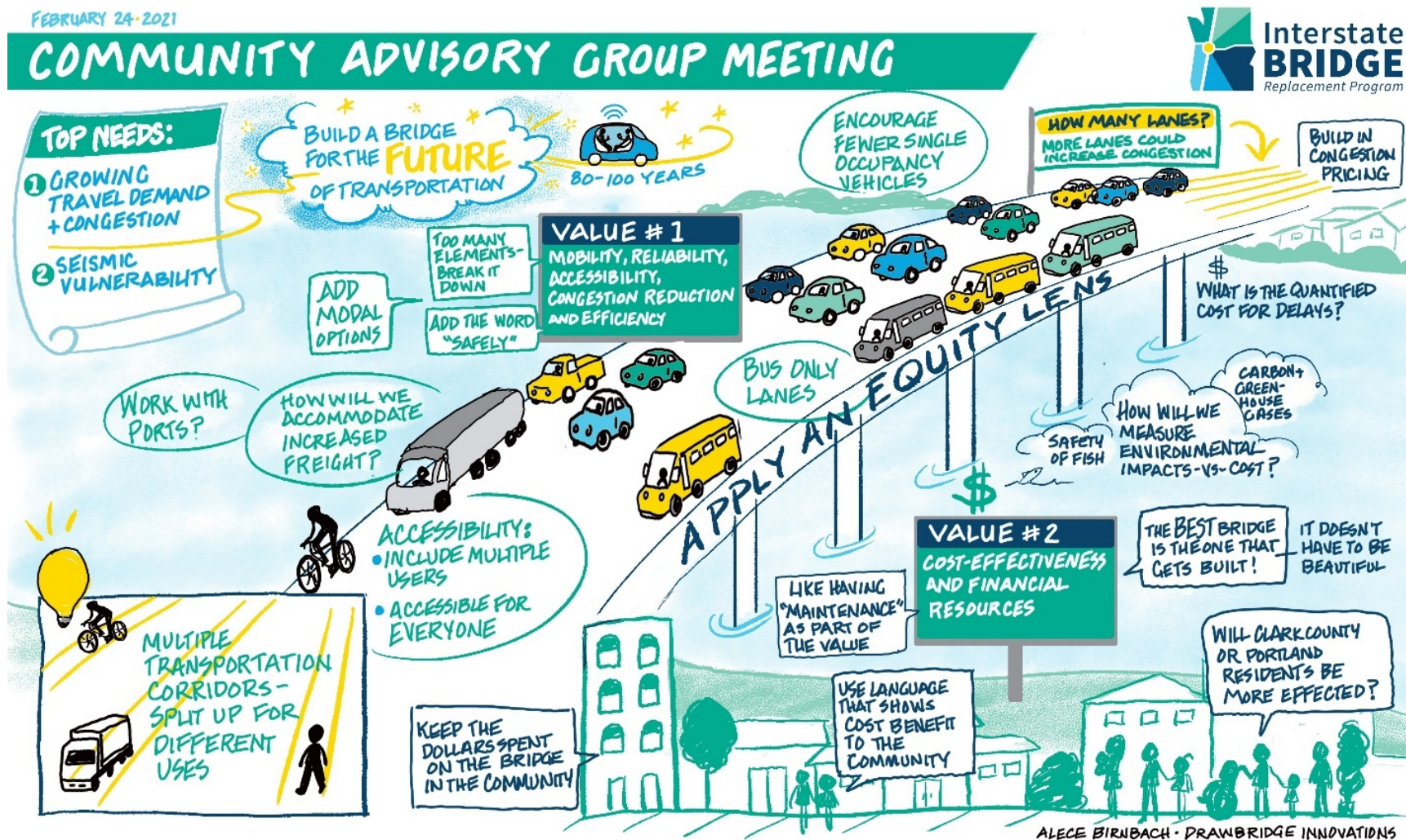
1. Mobility, reliability accessibility, congestion reduction and efficiency (59%)
2. Cost effectiveness and financial resources (26%)
3. Regional economy and freight mobility (19%)
4. Bi-state cooperation (15%)
5. Equity (15%)
6. Safety (15%)
7. Stewardship of the environment and people (11%)
8. Quality of life (7%)
9. Climate Change (4%)<sup>5</sup>

Figure 27 reflects the conversations heard during the CAG meeting held on February 24 and are not representative of future solutions.

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<sup>5</sup> Participants could select up to two values and percentages therefore do not add to 100%.

Figure 27. CAG February 24, 2021, Meeting Feedback



During the February 24 and March 10 CAG meetings, the live survey responses were used to prompt discussions about the community's priorities for a bridge replacement solution. The most frequent topics of discussion were:

- Equity
- Funding/construction
- Cost/maintenance cost
- Sustainability/environmental impacts

#### 4.6.2 Equity Advisory Group

The EAG was established to ensure the program remains centered on equity. The group makes recommendations to IBR program leadership regarding processes, policies and decisions that have the potential to affect historically underrepresented and underserved communities, such as communities of color, people with disabilities, people experiencing low income, communities with limited English proficiency, and people with limited transportation options. The first major task of the EAG was to develop a program-specific definition of equity.

The EAG meetings on February 15 and March 8 included opportunities to provide feedback on transportation problems and community values. During the February 15 meeting, the EAG provided initial feedback on the top transportation problems and priority community values; during the March 8 meeting they partook in a small group exercise to inform how equity should be incorporated in program environmental documents.

#### Key Takeaways and Themes

Discussions with the EAG regarding transportation problems and community values yielded the following general themes:

- **Avoid further harm:** Communities in the corridor have been historically victimized by large public projects, and the program must avoid repeating this pattern.
- **Future-focused aspirations:** While avoiding harm is crucial, it is not enough if the program is to achieve truly equitable processes and outcomes.
- **Implications for low-income community members:** The program should improve transportation options specifically for lower wage workers and other travelers with low income while mitigating the disproportionate impacts that potential tolls would have.
- **Strengthen communities, now and in the future:** The program should not only engage but involve the community throughout the process. This includes finding ways to accentuate the relationship between the communities being connected, reflecting the diversity of the community in the design of the bridge, ensuring equitable access to employment and contracting opportunities during construction, and continuing to invest in communities going forward.

- **Public transportation:** One of the most important needs for the program is to improve transportation options for non-drivers, particularly public transportation.

### What We Heard

The program held initial discussions with the EAG at their February 15 and March 8 meetings. At the February 15 meeting, the group responded to the following:

When thinking about historically marginalized communities and those often without decision-making authority, consider the following questions:

- What about the IBR program is particularly important to historically marginalized and underserved communities?
- What elements do you think a new bridge or structure should have to be responsive to and supportive of the needs of historically marginalized and underserved communities?
- What should the process of planning, designing and building a new bridge/structure focus on when considering the needs of those who experience transportation barriers in their daily lives? How can the program address or fix these?

“We should be asking questions about benefits for each of the communities of concern, how that community benefits, and what those benefits are.”

- EAG member

“When we talk about benefits, we should be clear about for whom and how, and focus on how people are impacted.”

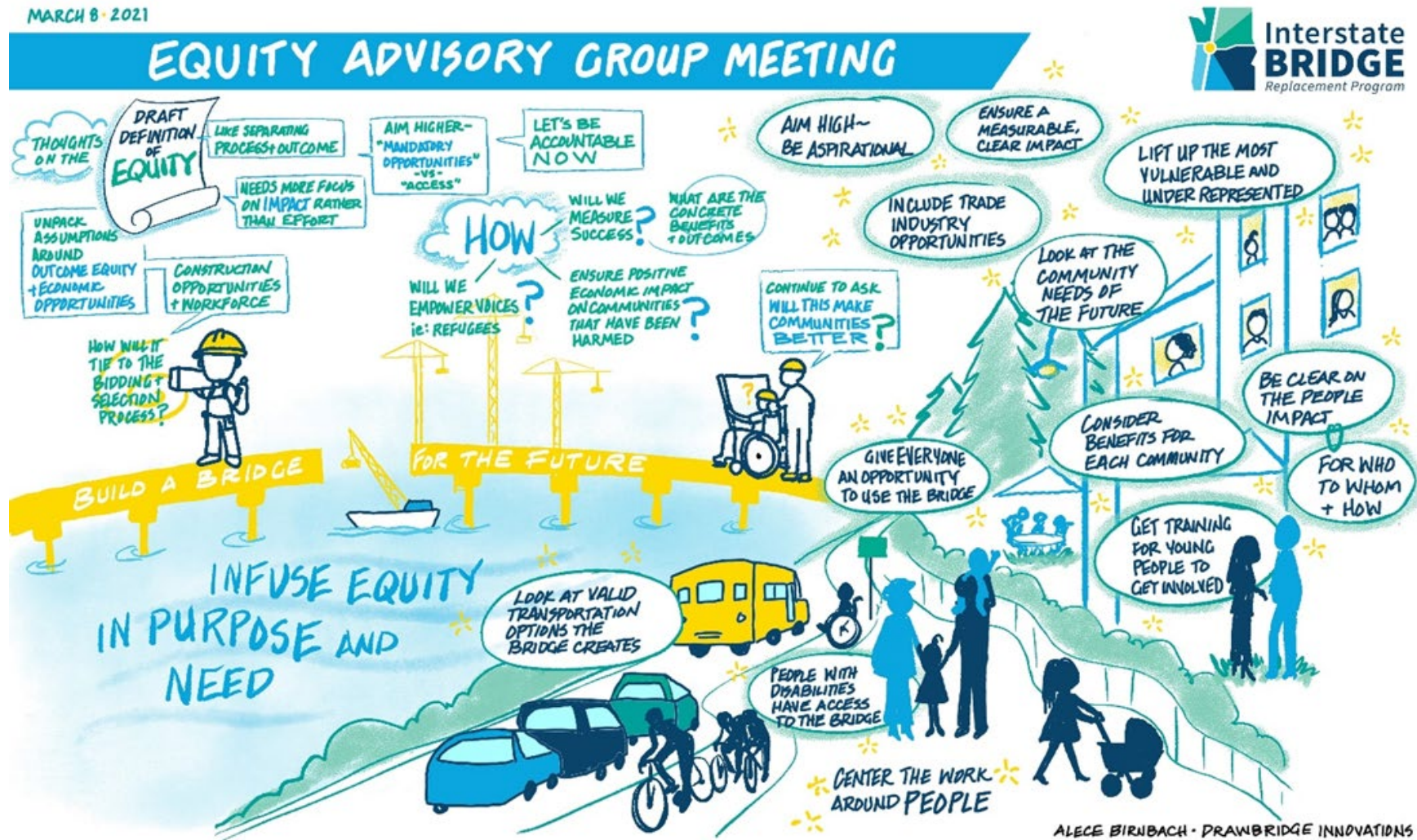
- EAG member

Staff returned to the EAG at its March 8 meeting to share updates and solicit feedback specifically on equity-focused topics. The discussion was framed in terms of the story the program will tell, using the following prompts:

- Does this capture the story of what equity means in terms of the needs and goals for the IBR program?
- Is there anything more we need to say to tell the story? What additional information or data would we need to support that?
- What would it look like if the story played out inequitably?

Figure 28 reflects the conversations heard during the EAG meeting held on March 8 and are not representative of future solutions.

Figure 28. EAG March 8, 2021, Meeting Feedback



## 4.7 Community Liaisons and Multilingual Engagement

The program worked with multilingual community engagement liaisons who are fluent in other languages and deeply connected within their local communities to help spread the word about the program and connect with communities that have been historically marginalized or underrepresented in public transportation projects. The liaisons offered a two-way dialogue in eight languages: Simplified Chinese, Traditional Chinese, Korean, Somali, Spanish, Russian, Ukrainian and Vietnamese. They used an assortment of virtual outlets including social media and cultural/linguistically based apps, resources and newsletters. They also networked through a variety of avenues including reaching out to their personal networks, community leaders, college students, school parent groups, churches and religious institutions, and other organizations.

### 4.7.1 Key Takeaways and Themes

The multilingual liaisons engagement resulted in community members completing more than 300 surveys via phone, translated social media, and translated paper materials. Their conversations with community members are categorized as follows:

- Problems experienced on and around the Interstate Bridge.
- Feedback on the program.
- Suggestions for the survey and website.
- Advice on the community engagement process.

### 4.7.2 What We Heard

#### Interstate Bridge

Community members shared a wide range of concerns about the current bridge, identifying the following as top concerns: congestion, safety and earthquake vulnerability. Other comments included ensuring design of a replacement bridge solution is cost effective and includes public transportation options across the river. Some members commented on the need to provide safe facilities for bicyclists and pedestrians crossing the bridge.

“I hope [the program] will solve the congestion problem. It takes me a lot of time when I travel over this bridge, so [I am] happy to hear that they will fix it.”

- Vietnamese-speaking community member

## Program Process

Participants expressed a general lack of awareness about the program including confusion about which bridge is being replaced, as well as questions regarding future plans such as when construction will occur and what alternative route will be used while the bridge is

under construction. Others expressed concerns that congestion will remain after the replacement because they believe so many people are moving to the region. There was also some lack of confidence that the bridge will ultimately be replaced, which provided a timely opportunity for liaisons to share information about the program.

“I hope this project will solve the traffic problem.”

- Spanish-speaking community member

## Survey and Website

Some community members found the survey informative and understandable. Others expressed concerns with the survey structure stating that there were too many choices, the questions were difficult and confusing, and the survey was hard to navigate. Many participants suggested an online, rather than paper, translated survey in all eight languages. Some participants found the website informative, while others found it difficult to navigate.

## Engagement Process

Multiple community members expressed gratitude for the IBR program directly engaging with the Chinese community. Community members also suggested increasing outreach to multilingual audiences, allowing more time to provide feedback (many communities are currently more concerned about getting the COVID-19 vaccine than replacing the bridge), and including visuals of the future bridge. Lastly, they advised the program to create actual opportunities for underserved communities, not just promising to do so.

## 4.8 Community-Based Organization Outreach

The program communicated directly with community-based organizations to help deliver on the program’s commitment to inclusive, two-way dialogue while centering equity. Prior to the opening of the online open house and interactive survey, an email announcement was sent to 331 community organizations throughout the region to inform them of the upcoming engagement opportunities to help spread the word within their networks.

Following that effort, the program followed up with 118 community organizations via phone (and an additional email when not available by phone) between February and mid-March. The program recognizes that due to the COVID-19 pandemic, many organizations working with marginalized communities are strained with limited resources. Recognizing the need to expand outreach beyond an email, the program identified organizations within the program area whose mission is to serve marginalized communities including houseless populations, people experiencing low income, people



experiencing disabilities, neighborhood associations, and Black, indigenous and people of color communities.

As a result of direct community outreach efforts, nine organizations requested program presentations at their community meetings, with additional requests ongoing. One organization requested hard copies of the factsheet which were delivered by program staff. Another requested an article about the program for inclusion in their newsletter. Others agreed to share program information with their network via social media or email.

Direct email and phone outreach allowed the program to receive meaningful feedback regarding community perspectives, priorities and the approach to community engagement. Many organizations have an immediate priority of providing COVID-19 relief, especially those working with communities of concern. However, they understand the impact this program has on the region as well as their community and appreciated the continued opportunities to engage.

#### 4.8.1 What We Heard

In general, community-based organizations were appreciative that the program attempted to reach them multiple times in various ways, but they felt their time to provide input was limited during this targeted engagement window, leading to questions of whether their feedback would be seriously considered. Many of these organizations indicated they prefer intentional ways of collecting information and felt that a focus group setting would allow for more in-depth feedback and engagement.

Organizations that work with communities of concern gave specific feedback on how to reach more of their community members. Their feedback provided insight that the program has already integrated into outreach plans. The program reiterated the importance of this initial engagement effort as the beginning of an ongoing dialogue throughout the life of the program; this was not the only opportunity to engage and provide feedback.

### 4.9 Public Comment

Extensive outreach began in early February and invited the public to submit comments. The public could comment on any topic of their choosing via three submission methods:

- Email – [info@interstatebridge.org](mailto:info@interstatebridge.org)
- IBR website comment form: [www.interstatebridge.org/contact](http://www.interstatebridge.org/contact)
- Online open house comment form (live from February 16 to March 1)

#### 4.9.1 Key Takeaways and Themes

Between February 1 and March 1, the program received 146 total comments, with the most received through the online open house form (61), followed closely by the other two methods (55 via email and 50 via the website form). All public comments were analyzed, with the following identified as the most common topics:

- Additional river crossing or corridor
- Tunnel
- Program process
- Public transit
- Active transportation improvements
- Tolling

Details about each comment topic are provided in the following sections and will be taken into consideration as the program addresses each relevant topic.

### 4.9.2 User Demographics

The comment forms on the IBR website and online open house contained optional demographic fields including state of residence and frequency of bridge use. Approximately 100 of the 111 people who commented via these methods provided demographic information. The representation from Oregon and Washington was almost equally split, with 56 from Oregon and 45 from Washington. Three people selected “other.”

Of those who answered the demographic question about river crossing frequency, most (39) cross occasionally followed by several times a month (26).

Table 2. User Demographics from Website and Online Open House Comment Forms

Self-Identified River Crossing Usage	Number of Respondents
Two to three times a week	16
Daily	18
Never	3
Occasionally	39
Several times a month	26

### 4.9.3 What We Heard

#### Additional River Crossing or Corridor

Community members who commented on this topic are interested in seeing an additional river crossing corridor created to supplement the existing Interstate 5 corridor. Several respondents would like the program to consider a regional bypass that freight or non-local traffic could use. The program also heard interest in building a bridge that would connect the Troutdale/Gresham area to east Vancouver.

## Tunnel

Community members who commented on this topic are interested in seeing a tunnel as a possible solution to replacing the bridge or as an addition to the Interstate Bridge. Respondents suggested researching a tunnel under the Columbia River.

## Process

Some participants commented on the scope and process. Many are concerned about cost, timing and relevance of previous planning efforts.

## Public Transit

Some respondents are in support of, while others are against, incorporating transit into a replacement bridge. There is a split between members viewing transit as a vital interstate connection, while others worry about associated cost and a belief that it could increase crime.

“No light rail...Bus/BRT lanes only. Busses will be electric in the future, maybe even fuel cell. This way, we have options including using the lanes for emergency vehicles.”

- Participant comment

## Active Transportation Improvements

Participants commented on multimodal and active transportation improvements. Comments received regarding bicycle and pedestrian facilities all reflected a need for improvements. Additional access for other methods to travel across the bridge were also mentioned.

“Any bridge should also address accessibility for disabled people and people using newer active modes aka, skateboards, scooters, etc.”

- Participant comment

## Tolling

Community members who shared their opinions on tolling expressed differing viewpoints, with some seeing tolling as an effective payment method, while others viewing it as a burden.

“I support the notion of tolling on the interstate bridge replacement, as long as measures are undertaken to support the greater Portland metro area. Firstly, any tolling inputs need to have camera fast pass to allow for uninterrupted travel.”

- Participant comment

“Tolling would be a great mistake. Fight for more money from the federal government.”

- Participant comment

## 4.10 Listening Sessions

In a commitment to ensuring the program is elevating voices of equity from communities of concern and youth, four focus group listening sessions were held in mid-March, two with historically marginalized communities and two with youth (ages 16 to 25). To identify participants, the program leveraged CAG and EAG member relationships, used social media, and directly contacted organizations that center historically marginalized communities and youth voices.

The listening sessions were facilitated by program staff with experience communicating and working with these groups. The sessions included a program overview followed by a facilitated discussion to allow for open-ended input to learn more about participants’ priorities, concerns and community values.

### 4.10.1 Elevating Equity Sessions

More than 40 community members in total attended the two sessions. Most participants were aware of the previous work to replace the bridge, but they were generally unaware of the current program and opportunities to engage.

#### Key Takeaways and Themes

Themes from these sessions included:

- Engage creatively and accessibly, with low barriers to commit.
- Prioritize multimodal transportation.
- Ensure durability and safety.
- Reduce environmental and health impacts in surrounding areas.

#### What We Heard

Many noted this was their first time engaging with the program and were surprised the program made the effort to conduct direct community engagement. They appreciated the direct outreach and felt

the listening sessions centered their voices. The limited number of participants helped individuals feel empowered to speak candidly and freely.

Participants shared their values of equity, environment and accessibility. Concerns regarding tolling were also mentioned. Many advised the program to keep in mind the burden tolling could have on low-income community members that are already struggling.

Regarding accessibility, participants offered ideas on how to engage more people from their communities. One participant requested both American Sign Language and closed captioning at meetings and other events. Others echoed the idea of hosting community-specific events for communities of concern to create a “safe space” for engagement. Most participants appreciated this direct form of engagement, would like to continue engaging, and recommended the program take further steps to engage each specific community of concern.

#### 4.10.2 Youth Listening Sessions

Participants ranged in age from 16 to 25 and represented high school and college students, working young adults, commuters, drivers that rely on personal vehicles, and those that rely on public transportation. Most attending knew very little about the program and were encouraged to participate from direct outreach and word of mouth sources because the bridge directly impacts their lives. Twelve community members in total attended the two sessions in addition to two members of the CAG.

##### Key Takeaways and Themes

Guided by discussion questions, the program heard the following themes:

- Consider environmental impacts.
- Consider safety.
- Move forward as one region.
- Ensure the bridge is accessible to all.
- Remain mindful of transit options.
- Design a structure our community feels proud of.

##### What We Heard

When asked how to best engage with youth in the region, participants provided suggestions such as multilingual social posts, school presentations, school newsletters, surveys, and connecting with local, youth community-based organizations. A recurring conversation was the need for accessible communications that reach broad audiences. Feedback also included the perspective that centering equity meant ensuring community voices are heard. Participants felt strongly that the listening sessions and other direct engagement are a positive reflection of the program’s commitment to center equity. All attendees expressed their appreciation for learning more and indicated they are eager to continue engaging.

## 5. CONCLUSION

The program's targeted community engagement period from February to mid-March was successful in reaching many community members and providing the program with extensive feedback. As the program progresses, the findings from this engagement will be used to influence program outcomes and tailor the ways the program engages with the community. Targeted engagement periods, such as this recent effort, will continue to occur during program milestones to seek specific feedback to help shape the program.

Outside of the targeted engagement periods, opportunities for community members to engage are ongoing. There are multiple avenues to provide public comments, and the program continues to hold conversations with communities of concern, regional stakeholders, and community organizations to keep them apprised of program development, better understand how to center equity, and consider suggestions about improving the program's outreach approach.

### 5.1 Incorporating Community Feedback

While working with the advisory groups, organizations, and community members, the program identified the following themes related to the transportation problems and community priorities and values:

- While there are disagreements about how to solve the identified transportation problems, there is widespread agreement that the six previously identified transportation problems still exist.
- Congestion and seismic resiliency were frequently cited as top concerns by organizations, advisory groups and community members.
- While the needs identified from previous planning work remain valid, some existing conditions and community values have changed.
- There is great interest in discussing and considering transportation solutions.

The feedback received during this targeted engagement period will be used to shape the program moving forward, including developing equity and climate frameworks, improving outreach efforts, and determining the details of a future bridge replacement solution. The program will continue to use and update past work to support efficient decision-making, while ensuring that current community priorities and changes since the previous planning effort concluded are reflected as program decisions are made.

The program shares the commitment to equity and climate considerations expressed by community members, organizations and the advisory groups, and it is working with program partners to embed these priorities throughout the program in actionable and measurable ways. The program will continue to work with the advisory groups and stakeholders to consider community feedback and further define how a climate and equity lens can help shape the program.

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Community values will be used along with the climate and equity lens to determine design options to help shape the details of the future transportation solution, such as transit considerations, urban design, bridge aesthetics, active transportation choices, connections and access. Ongoing community engagement efforts will include additional opportunities to gather feedback on specific topics through avenues such as listening sessions, focus groups and working groups. We thank each participant for taking the time to provide their valuable feedback during this robust community engagement period.