

EQUITY ADVISORY GROUP (EAG) MEETING #34

Date and Time: Monday, March 18, 2024, 5:30pm to 7:30pm

Location: Zoom Webinar and YouTube Livestream

Number of concurrent YouTube viewers: 20

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, provided IBR program updates and shared some recent milestones. He described several important recent outreach events. These included Community Forum with Odyssey World International Educational Services, as well as listening sessions with Odyssey World and the Slavic Community Center. Greg explained that this aligns with IBR's commitment to reach into communities who are often not engaged on large projects. Greg shared that a multilingual community-based organization tour and press conference were hosted to demonstrate that non-native English speakers feel welcomed to participate in the program.

Greg also shared that the Executive Steering Group recently met, which consists of representatives from the advisory groups and state and local agencies. This provided an opportunity for IBR leadership to update these partners with the latest information involving the program.

Greg updated the group about the Oregon and Washington Commissions for tolling. The Commissions signed an intergovernmental agreement to establish a bi-state toll subcommittee to recommend rates and policies to the respective Commissions of each state. Greg further stated that Oregon no longer intends to toll I-205 and that tolling for the bridge will be administrated by Washington. The dialogue remains ongoing, and the next meeting will be on April 19, 2024, which anyone can watch.

Greg shared that the Draft SEIS is still in review and is taking longer than anticipated. The team is working on creating an updated cost estimate to track inflation and escalation, as well as a delivery plan for the project.

EAG member question: *"What led Oregon's governor to make that decision about tolling?"*

Greg responded that he cannot speculate but that the door is not closed. He said that the option to reconsider is there but they are stopping and reassessing for now. Greg noted that the Governor is supportive of tolling on the I-5 bridge for the purposes that we need it for.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT REPORT

Salome Chimuku, Community Engagement Lead, provided engagement numbers from January 2024 to mid-March. This figure included presentations, interviews, tours, forums, and office hours. There have been over 45 public engagement events in this timespan, not including advisory group meetings.

Salome also shared information about the Community-Based Organization miniature grant program. Eight programs participated in the most recent cycle. The mini grant cohort hosted 7 listening sessions and 2 community forums that engaged 235 community members, 97% of whom identified as members of equity priority communities. During this round of community engagement, feedback included community members having difficulties connecting with the environmental evaluation process. Community members were also asked to identify issues most important to them. The identified issues included matters of safety, economic impacts, and aesthetics. Salome stated that this feedback will inform future engagement efforts, specifically in how the program contacts community members and shares important information.

Lastly, Salome shared upcoming engagement opportunities, including public briefings, listening sessions, and an equity roundtable event.

VISUALIZATIONS

Shilpa Mallem, Design Manager, presented visualizations that show the investments being proposed to provide a comparison for users to what exists today.

Shilpa shared that the river crossing visualizations show the three different kinds of bridge types (single-level, double-level, moveable span) being studied in the environmental process. Shilpa explained that the visualizations are not meant to inform decision-making, and that future technical analysis will make that determination later in 2024.

Shilpa presented images of potential bridge designs. She presented the double-deck, single-level, and movable span configurations from the perspective of the west side of the bridge in Oregon looking north, then from the east side of the bridge looking north to see the proposed shared-use path. Shilpa then presented viewpoints from the Vancouver waterfront, looking east from the west side of the bridge, then from the east side of the bridge looking west.

EAG member: *“That was the first time I was able to envision walking across it. Seeing these images changed my impression from negative to positive; it actually looks nice.”*

EAG member: *“I’m curious as to why lines of light railways have to be overheard.”*

Shilpa responded that this is something they are currently looking into. Matt Deml, Design Team, stated that TriMet currently uses the overhead contact wire for their light rail system.

EAG member: *“I’ve been on TriMet’s alert system, and it seems like icy conditions are an issue with that design.”*

Matt responded that those extreme weather conditions do present problems, but TriMet has maintenance teams that are responsive to those issues. Matt and Shilpa stated that they are working with TriMet on the design, so the conversation on such concerns is ongoing.

EAG member: *“Can we share these pictures?”*

Shilpa said yes, and that she can share the pictures outside of the presentation for easier use.

EAG member: *“Thank you for walking us through the visualizations. I remember earlier in some of our EAG conversations that we discussed accessibility in engaging with these visualizations. Has this been addressed at this phase?”*

Shilpa responded that this is the next step in creating their visualizations and models, especially in anticipation of the draft SEIS, to ensure accessibility.

WORKFORCE STUDY

Aidan Gronauer, Assistant Director of Civil Rights and Equity for the IBR program, and Kelly Haines of WorkSystems Inc. presented the findings of the regional Workforce Study.

Aidan shared that the IBR program recognizes the need for local agencies to improve workforce readiness in anticipation of the large projects expected in the region. The IBR program commissioned the Workforce Study to help inform the program in developing strategies to improve career opportunities for women and people of color in the construction and professional, technical, and engineering (PTE) trades. The Workforce Study also identified current and projected gaps in workforce needs for infrastructure projects over the next five years.

Kelly introduced the research team to the group, then presented the methodology for the study. Kelly explained that the study used multiple data sources and interviews with various relevant audiences.

Kelly shared that about 43,000 people work in the construction trades in the Portland area, and that 5% are women and 26% are people of color. She highlighted that women and workers of color are overrepresented in the lower paying trades. Kelly explained that, although there are enough workers total to meet anticipated demand in the area, the program’s diversity goals will not be met. She underscored the importance of new recruiting and retention strategies to overcome this expected deficit.

Kelly described the barriers to diversifying workforces. She stated harassment, real-life hardship, childcare, fewer opportunities for advancement for women and people of color, and lack of flexibility in work schedules are the commonly reported barriers.

Based on the findings, Kelly presented several recommendations to the IBR program: collaborate with entities throughout the area to build a diverse workforce, address issues that impact retention, and work closely with project managers and contractors to find opportunities for improvement.

Aidan stated that the next steps with the Workforce Study is to publish the study on the website, analyze the recommendations, and develop an action plan for implementation. He then opened the discussion for questions.

EAG member: *“I want to thank the IBR team for doing this study. They have been critical to our efforts in the region to advance workforce equity strategies. I look forward to reading it on the website. I have a few comments. We have such an opportunity to build on the work being done in Washington and Oregon, so I want to encourage us to work together and collaborate to reach new heights. I see us as partners in bringing forward our learning. I also want to say that early investment in the system will be so important, such as CBOs and pre-apprenticeship programs to support our workers. We need to invest in our partners who support workers who face the greatest barriers. This is the realness of this work coming together.”*

EAG member: *“I agree with what the other member said. We want to share this opportunity to grow in this industry.”*

Greg thanked the team for putting this report together but stated that there are challenges ahead in changing how people perceive the trades and working in them. Greg stated that the IBR program is committed to creating an ideal program where people feel they can work without facing discrimination or harassment. Greg stated that this can be a life-changing opportunity for people to get good jobs, so outreach to young people and vulnerable communities will be vital.

EAG member: *“I am really excited about this. I come from a city that hosted the Super Bowl in 2015, and that event created so many jobs in preparation for that event. However, once the Super Bowl was done, the jobs were done. We had hundreds of BIPOC and women without jobs. I’m hoping part of this conversation is about going above and beyond to have an intentional conversation about life after the bridge is built.”*

Kelly responded to this point and stated that it is addressed in the report. The study found that when someone is successful on one project, they tend to leapfrog to other similar projects throughout the region. The skills acquired working on the project create stability in a career in the trades.

EAG member: *“We know this is going to be a huge project and we will need people from out-of-state. Will those people have the same expectation of hiring locally if they have to add staff?”*

Greg responded and stated the program is looking into zip code hiring preferences for the project. Specifically, the program will assess where BIPOC communities primarily reside and target those areas. Aidan shared that the program will also look at economically distressed zip codes for hiring priority. They clarified that no one will be excluded by zip code, but that dedicated efforts will be made to target local areas.

EAG member: *“When can we start finding a pathway to start finding resources to build the workforce of tomorrow, today?”*

Greg replied that this study is the precursor to those actions. The program had to understand the size and nature of the issue, and this study provides a roadmap to addressing them.

EAG member: *“We need to make sure people know this is an opportunity available to them. I recently attended a Women in the Trades event, and it was powerful seeing women iron workers and masons on a panel talking about their work. Community partners like this can help us connect to the communities we want to recruit.”*

EAG member: *“In addition to working with youth, there’s an opportunity to work with older people and non-traditional learners.”*

HAYDEN ISLAND STATION

Mahlon Clements, Urban Design Lead, and Ben Deines, Transit Station Design Lead, presented potential designs for the Hayden Island transit station. Ben reminded the group of the Equity Objectives created by the EAG and encouraged the group to assess the station concept designs while considering those objectives.

Ben presented an overhead view of the proposed station location on Hayden Island. He explained it is a proposed elevated station, and that new sidewalks, ramps, and stairs are proposed, along with new roadways to reach the station area.

Mahlon introduced a station design comparison matrix that provides a guide to assessing station concepts. He explained that it can be difficult to assess the best design solely based on quantitative information, but the guide is helpful in considering issues like accessibility and platform configuration.

Mahlon explained that they are currently considering location, configuration, and program elements for the station in this early planning.

Concept A is a two-platform station on Tomahawk Drive. The issue with this configuration is that it has two platforms, which is more difficult to use than a center platform. The benefit to this configuration is that it is easier to incorporate a ramp to access each platform. Concept B is at the same location as A but is a center-platform configuration. The disadvantage to this configuration is that it limits the flexibility in where the elevators and stairs can be placed. The disadvantage of this location for both concepts is that the ramp would require a lot of switchbacks to reach the station.

Concept C shifts the station location to beside Tomahawk Drive and features two platforms. Concept D is the same location but with a center platform.

EAG member: *“For Concept B, would the ramp provide access to the center platform? Meaning, one ramp allows someone to access both tracks?”*

Mahlon responded that it does, but it requires four switchbacks. He further stated that they are proposing two elevators.

EAG member: *“Is Concept B the only design that provides a ramp that has access to both platforms at the same time?”*

Mahlon responded that this is correct. Ben explained that in Concept A, the ramp takes people to the station level, but once there, they would have to cross the tracks to reach the other platform. Mahlon stated that Concepts C and D would face additional challenges configuring ramps due to the location of Center Avenue in relation to the station.

EAG member: *“I’m curious about escalators.”*

Mahlon responded that escalators have not been deeply considered because they are a significant maintenance problem in open-air stations. He stated that escalators can add mobility, but they do not address many accessibility issues.

EAG member: *“When I use public spaces, I am fearful to use the elevators. I will choose to use the stairs even though I have mobility issues because I can’t see who is on the elevator.”*

Mahlon responded that this is a common challenge with public elevators. He shared that the elevators would largely be glass to increase visibility into and out of the elevator to help address safety concerns.

EAG member: *“The stairs, ramp, everything is open-air? They are exposed to the climate?”*

Mahlon responded that these concepts do not reflect weather protection measures, which are intended, but not yet specifically designed. There are still considerations about whether to cover the stairs or design them as outdoor stairs, but that analysis is not complete.

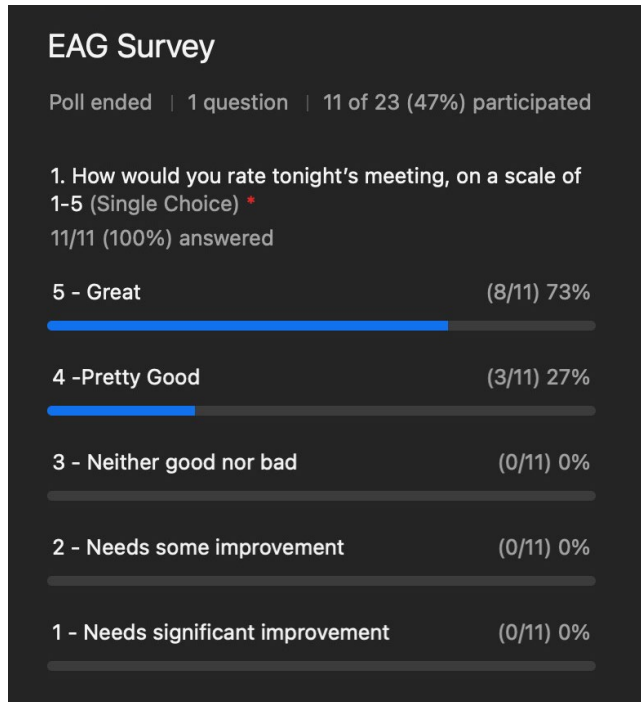
EAG member: *“Weather out here is changing, and I am concerned about snow, ice, and severe weather. Response to extreme weather is still slow around here even though the climate is changing. I hope there is real intentionality around this. Weather and outdoor stairs can be challenging for a number of people for a number of reasons.”*

Mahlon thanked the EAG member for the comment. He then welcomed more questions and comments, as public input helps them consider equity matters outside of their traditional training as physical designers.

PUBLIC COMMENT

No comment

MEETING EVALUATION POLL



ADJOURN

- Next EAG meeting: April 15, 2024, 5:30pm-7:30pm
- Following EAG meeting: May 20, 2024, 5:30pm-7:30pm

ATTENDEES

Attendees	Organization/Affiliation
EAG Members	
John Gardner	TriMet
Aidan Gronauer (they/he)	WSDOT
Alicia Sojourner	City of Vancouver

Attendees	Organization/Affiliation
Vicki Nakashima	Community member
Jennifer Campos	SW Washington Regional Transportation Council
Nicole Chen	City of Vancouver
Barbara Alexander	Port of Portland
Pat Daniels	Constructing Hope
Sebrina Owens-Wilson	Metro
Shane Valle	City of Portland
Meg Johnson	Community member
Chandra Washington	C-TRAN
IBR Staff	
Greg Johnson	Program Administrator
Kelly Haines	WorkSystems, Inc.
Shilpa Mallem	IBR Design Manager
Mahlon Clements	Design Team
Ben Deines	Design Team
Tanya Adams	WSP Inclusion and Diversity
Rob Turton	Structures Lead
Matt Deml	Design Manager
Dr. Roberta Suzette Hunte	Facilitator
Salomé Chimuku	Community Engagement Lead

Attendees	Organization/Affiliation
Yemaya Hall-Ruiz	Equity Team
Erika McCalpine	Equity Team
Shannon Singleton	Equity Team
Fabiola Casas	Community Engagement Team
Tracy Ukura	Captioner
Mary Herman	ASL Interpreter
Zander Arnold	Tech Support

MEETING RECORDING AND MATERIALS

Meeting Recording

A recording of the meeting is available here: [Equity Advisory Group \(EAG\) March 18th, 2024 5:30PM PST - YouTube](#)

Meeting Materials

The meeting materials are available here: [EAG March 18, 2024 Meeting | Interstate Bridge Replacement Program](#)