

EQUITY ADVISORY GROUP (EAG) MEETING #9

Subject: EAG Meeting #9 Summary

Date and Time: Monday, August 16th, 2021, 5:30pm to 7:30pm

Location: Zoom Webinar and YouTube Livestream

Number of concurrent viewers: 8 live, 27 total views as of 8/20/2021

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.

- IBR Bridge Stories video
- Program Administrator Update
- Equity-focused Screening Criteria for Design Options
- Equity Framework: Building out components of Process & Outcome Equity
- Public comment
- Close out

1. IBR BRIDGE STORIES VIDEO

Jake Warr introduced this month's Bridge Stories video, which featured Randali, a working mom from Portland, Oregon who grew up in Mexico. The full series is available on the program website and on YouTube.

2. PROGRAM ADMINISTRATOR UPDATE

Greg Johnson, IBR program administrator, then took over to update the EAG on the program's efforts. Greg shared that this time has been quite busy for IBR and that the team has been creating models to examine the following key questions:

- High-capacity transit
- Number of auxiliary lanes
- Interchange on Hayden Island
- Replacement of North Portland Harbor Bridge

The EAG will have opportunities to weigh in on these questions, which will create the “IBR solution”. The program is shooting for the end of March to present the IBR solution to the Bi-state Legislative Committee. Greg informed the EAG that they may meet twice a month in 2022 in preparation for that presentation. He has been working to communicate with partners and the media to inform them where they can weigh in. The IBR program has taken a look at some often-suggested solutions such as a tunnel or a third bridge. Greg shared that the program has examined these solutions and have determined that they do not meet the Purpose & Need as defined by the community, so the program will no longer be examining those options.

Greg also explained that the Port of Portland has stated that they will not be developing West Hayden Island, opening up more potential for a Hayden Island interchange.

A lot of the work being done within the program right now is internal—“crunching numbers” and examining all transit options and alternatives. The EAG will be taking a look at those options from an equity standpoint using the soon-to-be developed screening criteria.

The Executive Steering Group met near the end of July and provided input and posed questions for the program to answer. The program is developing intergovernmental agreements with all of the partner agencies involved so that they can check and examine the data. Greg has been stressing to the partners that everyone doesn’t need to love the outcome of the bridge, but they should love the process and feel assured that it is unbiased and built from consensus. The ESG meeting was rescheduled to September 15th due to a conflict with the Jewish holiday Yom Kippur.

Community Working Groups are beginning to meet to provide feedback about specific questions the program will be asking them.

The Community Advisory Group met August 5th and were presented with the IBR program timeline and Climate Framework. The next meeting will introduce the Equity Framework.

3. EQUITY-FOCUSED SCREENING CRITERIA

Jake led a discussion on screening criteria for design options. He refreshed the EAG on the key elements of the physical build of the IBR solution:

- Mode and alignment of high-capacity transit
- Number through-lanes and auxiliary lanes
- Highway interchange improvements
- Active transportation improvements

The goal of the screening criteria is to develop metrics by which the various design options are measured. As an example, Jake offered a hypothetical set of transit station location options which could be screened for the number of zero vehicle households within ½ mile.

A subgroup of the EAG began refining their menu of equity-focused screening criteria prior to this meeting. They determined that there was a need to define the term “Equity Priority Areas” which are used in multiple screening criteria. They also sought to measure east-west mobility and impacts to air quality within the “Equity Priority Areas” outside of the immediate program area. The goal of the subgroup’s next meeting which will be held before the next EAG meeting is to develop a recommended set of final criteria for the EAG to consider. Lily, a member of the subgroup, jumped in to discern between “Equity Priority Areas” and “Equity Priority Functions,” the latter of which include the east-west mobility consideration. Some equity considerations are not limited by geography.

Group Discussion #1

Jake then introduced the group discussion prompt: what types of analysis would help you compare how different design options can advance equity in the categories of “Environment & Community Health” and “Efficient Movement of People & Goods.”

- EAG member: A possible thing to examine would be: how accessible are interchanges within the program area for active transportation users?
 - Greg responded positively and added that this is something being currently considered by the Active Transportation Community Working Group.
- EAG member: Can the Bridge be scored by commute times from various areas, from cultural touchstones in each city, pollutants from each commute-impacting design options?
 - Greg shared that Metro has an air quality model that is being applied to each option and will be part of the screening criteria. This will be balanced against the general and continuing use of cars, but a goal of the design options will be to try to move single-occupancy vehicle rides to other modes.
- EAG member: Considering the reduction of cars across the bridge, could one of the criteria involve asking the community whether they would use a certain mode of transportation vs driving?
 - Greg explained that there are very accurate models to answer this question which will be part of the screening criteria.
- EAG member: A consideration might be to make sure that diesel trucks are moving through the bridge as fast as possible so as to not negatively impact air quality.

- Greg agreed with that idea and said it would be taken into account.
- Roberta: Where does measuring travel costs come in? One of the costs of gentrification is that groups are pushed out of where they lived, increasing transportation costs to get to places in their communities.
 - Johnell underscored the importance of looking at the recent Census results in these regards, especially looking at the boom in Clark County residents seeking cheaper housing.
 - Jake explained that the program is developing ways to look at cost considerations, and encouraged the EAG to provide their input on that development.
 - EAG member: When it comes to tolling, could park & ride stations on either side of the river be infused to avoid prohibitive tolls?
 - Greg: Talking with Commissioner Hardesty about how to be equitable to those communities affected by gentrification who have to regularly use the bridge via car. An option being discussed is making travel across the bridge free after a certain number of toll payments within a certain amount of time.
 - EAG member: If you could dig that deep, would tolling be based on income?
 - Greg: That is being looked into, but it may raise anonymity concerns. The more money that can be leveraged from federal partners, the lower the toll rate will be.

Group Discussion #2

Jake next introduced the next question: how should we define “Equity Priority Areas?” What places are frequented by communities of concern? Something to note is that the number of people of color in Clark County has doubled to 120,000 over the past 10 years. Clark County is seeing the greatest growth in the region.

- EAG member: Perhaps looking at park & ride and other station locations deep in the edges of the program area to access a number of locations, not just immediately either side of the bridge.
 - Greg: There’s a lot that needs to be taken into account with park & rides. They can be great supports for transit but some argue that they encourage public transit riders to make a car trip in the first place. Areas previously looked at for park & ride locations in Downtown Vancouver are now being occupied by high-value businesses.
 - EAG member: That makes me think that this is something we want to consider as part of the design options. Is there a bike path that people can take all the way up? Considering connections on either side of the bridge to outside of the program area. Even beyond a park & ride, the broader question that we could answer is “is there a way to make sure the public transportation is clear through the program area and not just across the bridge?”

- Greg: Yes, there are ways to look at the question. We can look at the sites for a park & ride or other generator facilities. Where's the optimum place to put a park & ride? What communities will benefit the most from one? These are questions that the modeling can answer for us.
- EAG member: I'd like to see the houseless community in Clark County, for which more encampments are being built such as by Esther Short, be able to access the bridge easily.

4. EQUITY FRAMEWORK UPDATE

Chris Lepe of the IBR Equity Panel introduced the latest efforts to expand on the components of Process & Outcome Equity as defined by the EAG.

Process equity:

- Acknowledge the historic context of the bridge
- Center the voices of communities of concern and translating community input into action
- Seek feedback from a diverse range of stakeholders to meaningfully shape program work
- Be explicit about race and system racism in the context of equity
- Identify disparities
- Attend to power dynamics among stakeholders
- Maintain a learning orientation

Outcome equity:

- Focus benefits disproportionately on communities of concern/impacted communities
- Avoid harm to communities of concern
- Use existing laws and regulations as the floor rather than the ceiling
- Establish clear actions and accountability

Chris asked the EAG for the input on other high-level commitments the IBR program should make to honor those definitions. They would be answering these in breakout groups.

- An EAG member asked for clarification on what "impacted communities" means in the context of equity.
 - Chris asked for that member's thoughts on the question, to which the member expressed their belief that everyone is impacted, so it's important to be specific about the definition that IBR is using to examine disproportionate impact. Does the program mean impacted communities in purely a geographic sense or a broader sense?

- Greg chimed in to loop back to the gentrification point—it’s important to look beyond geographic impact to those marginalized in transportation.
- The EAG member asked Greg to offer an example of a group excluded from the definition of “impacted communities.”
- Greg explained that “impacted communities” is specifically aimed toward communities who have received disproportionate harm from transportation projects in the corridor.
- Chris added that he thinks its important to continue to discuss this and put a definition on paper.
- Another EAG member added that the project could employ people impacted by gentrification in the region to provide the opportunity to change their lives in terms of income.

Small Group Discussions

EAG members split into small groups to discuss the components of Process and Outcome Equity. The following are the notes from these groups:

Outcome equity:

- Make sure each commitment is measurable
- Agree that each commitment must be measurable “maintain a focus on,” “we aim to,”—how would these be evaluated really? I appreciate that we’re getting closer to real applications on the bridge, but I am also concerned that we’ve backed away from the strength of language we used in the prior drafts and versions. The earlier versions were very clear that there would be decision-making power in the hands of communities of concern. I’m worried that we’re starting to bring a paternalistic approach to this. I may make some suggestions in the Word doc, because I don’t want to just complain without offering a solution.
- Where did the language of “communities of concern” come from?
 - Some have raised issues with the use of “marginalized and underserved communities” in the equity definition, so it was decided that “communities of concern” would be used instead. Feedback is welcome on that.
 - Sabrina: I worry about inventing new terms like “communities of concern” because I don’t think people know what that means. I also feel that it’s a bit patronizing. We have a clear list of communities who we want to benefit and this term obscures that reality.

- On economic opportunity: “including contracting and workforce development”—we want jobs for BIPOC folks.
- Ditto on everything already said. Also, what does economic opportunity look like long-term, not just within the confines of the project timeline? Especially in a transportation project which has generational impact. Intersectionality should be explicitly involved.
- “Mitigate to the greatest extent possible” could be more specific to ensure that communities are specifically provided for in, for example, a new ramp.
- How could land acknowledgement be implemented in our meeting and the bridge itself? So we can raise awareness of the ancestors of this land?
- I don’t mean to say that everything needs to be quantifiable earlier, but everything in the framework needs to be demonstrable, concretely.
- “Avoiding harm” I always have to pause, we don’t often know when harm is done until long after harm is done. *When* harm does occur, what does acknowledgement of that harm look like? What will we do to address that?

Process equity:

- Acknowledge historic context: Cowlitz Tribe had someone who was involved. Speaking w Tribal historian- helped get federal recognition- two sites with remains of tribal members in that area.
- Explicit about race/racism- if that voice is ignored (as it has in the past), how can we make sure that voice is not just heard, but acknowledging and changing practices. First time, remains had been bulldozed. Close to downtown Vancouver.
- Acknowledging can be expanded to not just acknowledging. Organizations are doing land acknowledgements, but we’re at a point where acknowledgement is no longer where we’re at. Need to move to doing something.
- Also include prevention of future harms.
- Greg – Tribal members were invited to participate. CAG/EAG not venues to negotiating program benefits with Tribes. Negotiating IGAs. Recognizing Tribal members need a seat at the table. Different discussion about how acknowledgements and benefits get to Tribal members.

- 2nd piece- beyond centering, need to amplify.
- Project is moving along quickly, seems we need to be a lot more specific. What does it mean to involve in a meaningful way? What are plans for that? Who will be representing those perspectives? How will input be prioritized? How does that equity lens change things in the process?
- Clarification that EAG and CAG are vehicles for that engagement.
- Because of centering of equity and climate are new pieces, should focus on that. If EAG and CAG primary sounding boards, members who are part of these groups need to be involved in talking with communities actively to understand priorities. Personal experiences cannot speak to priority communities. Be supported by the program to do this engagement and understand what is going on. Six months is not long enough to stand up meaningful public processes.
- Important to not be too vague. How can the different members of the EAG/CAG be utilized to engage different communities of concern?
- We need to have regular contact with communities of concern. We need to accurately reflect community priorities.
- Do folks who are part of the strategy know that is their charge? Sounds like they do.
- Consider the formulation of the questions themselves. Identify key decision milestones.

EAG members came back to report out from their small group discussions.

- Fabiola Casas, IBR Equity Associate, reported out for the Process Equity group. An overarching message heard within the group was being as detailed and specific as possible. Going beyond acknowledgement and being specific about what actions the program are committed to taking, especially considering the program area's history and harm to local tribes. An example of this was the word "centering"—explaining that we're going beyond centering and amplifying the voices of communities of concern. We also want to be as specific as possible about the charge of the CAG and EAG to be representatives of the concerns and needs of the communities that we're centering.
- Timo Isreb, IBR Communications Intern, reported out for the Outcome Equity group. The group wants to make sure that each commitment in the framework is measurable, using really clear language that can be evaluated and demonstrated concretely. There was concern that earlier versions of the

framework were more clear with measurable terms and commitments; this concern was particularly pointed at the new phrase “communities of concern.” Also discussed was the commitment to economic opportunity for BIPOC individuals, which should go beyond workforce development and training and offer specific jobs. There was also some discussion about land acknowledgement being incorporated both in EAG meetings and the bridge itself so we can raise awareness of the ancestors of this land.

- EAG member: One thing that came up as well that I wanted to elevate is the distinction between the goals that the IBR program has during the construction of the bridge as well as after the construction is done. Sometimes those goals are the same, and sometimes they are different. Looking at the question of: do we need to distinguish those goals?
- Greg: To that point, we need equity to be injected throughout the life of this program. If it involves people who work for one of the DOTs who help operate this bridge, people who help build it, people who help design it, people who are contracted to do street-sweeping—all of those people need to be part of our considerations moving forward, from cradle to grave.
- EAG member: I think my definition of “grave” is further out—I’m thinking of the bridge as something that will have a lasting impact on the area. I understand that there are limits to what we can influence, but we do have goals for things that will last way beyond our lifetimes. The current bridge has been here for 100 years and we’ve seen a lot of impact from it.
- Greg: One of the things I look at is having people who don’t look like the same old cast of characters helping to drive decisions in the future, which ensures that equity gets carried through the lifetime of the bridge. If we hire more people of color in ODOT and WSDOT who are sitting in rooms like this 25 years from now, that’s a way to ensure that equity spans beyond the construction of the bridge and into the lifetime of operation. That’s one of the outcomes I hope to achieve: a more diverse DOT which is making these decisions.

Chris asked members of the Process Equity and Outcome Equity small groups if they had any thoughts on the opposite group topic that they did not participate in.

- EAG member: Part of what I’m processing right now is focused on what Greg was just talking about. Being an Indigenous person working in systems that are supposed to be working for or with Indigenous children, the rules didn’t change no matter how diverse the staff was. It’s nice to have diversity but if we don’t have inclusivity at the top in making those decisions where the rules are being made, then I don’t think we’ll see change.
 - Greg: If we don’t start with diversity sitting at the top, then we will never have diversity of outcomes. I started at the bottom level of a DOT and rose up to Deputy Director to help change the culture of that DOT. We have a diverse set of interns working for us and we’re looking to have those people go to work for the DOT world and eventually be in the room

helping to shape those decisions with their background and lived experience. It's got to start somewhere.

- EAG member: I completely agree with that, I think where it says in the Outcome Equity section of using existing laws as the floor for the program, not the ceiling, is a good piece of it. That's where things need to be changed, is in those laws and regulations. If you try to bring change from within a system that isn't working for our communities, then that change isn't going to happen.
- EAG member: Being more specific in the Outcome Equity about what we can change and control, even if maybe we can't change certain rules or regulations this time around, will help make sure that these commitments aren't lost.

Chris encouraged the EAG to take the Equity Framework back to their communities and continue to offer feedback and suggest changes to ensure that their voices are incorporated into this document. Roberta asked if it would be helpful to add to the Framework that we will draw on best practices from across our region. Different municipalities are doing things that are moving the needle, especially thinking of the work Multnomah County is doing in relation to contracting. An EAG member also encouraged the program to look at lessons learned from unsuccessful efforts across the region.

5. PUBLIC COMMENT

No members of the public provided comments.

6. WRAP UP

Dr. Roberta Hunte asked the EAG for three quick takeaways from their meeting before adjourning.

- Greg: To end on a positive note, 20 years from now there will be someone who is thankful that this group came together and did the things they did. The good work being done here will reverberate in the future.
- Roberta: I appreciate the wisdom of the group and I invite them to really say what needs to be said-- although the Pacific Northwest is known for its niceness--because we represent people. If there is something that you think is being missed, put it out there!

ADJOURN

Roberta and Johnell closed out the meeting by thanking the EAG for their time and efforts. The next EAG meeting will be on September 20th from 5:30 to 7:30 pm.

EAG members took a meeting evaluation poll. Out of 14 responses, three selected “5 – Great”, seven selected “4 – Pretty good”, and four selected “3 – Neither good nor bad”.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:30 pm.



ATTENDEES

Attendees	Organization
EAG Members	
Nikotris Perkins	Oregon Department of Transportation

Attendees	Organization
Lily Copenagle	Community member
Hai That Ho Ton	Community member
Sydney Johnson	Fourth Plain Forward
Megan Marie Johnson	Community member
Sebrina Owens-Wilson	Metro
Lee Helfend	Community member
Shane Valle	Portland Bureau of Transportation
Mark Harrington	SW Washington Regional Transportation Council
Masha Egorenko	IRCO Slavic & Eastern European Center
Monica Tellez-Fowler	C-TRAN
Karyn Kameroff	Community member
Pat Daniels	Constructing Hope
Alicia Sojourner	City of Vancouver
IBR Staff	
Greg Johnson	Program Administrator
Jake Warr	Equity Lead
Johnell Bell	Principal Equity Officer
Chris Lepe	Equity Panel
Brent Hamlin	Tech support

August 16th, 2021



Attendees	Organization
Tanya Adams	Equity Panel
Dr. Roberta Hunte	Facilitator
Timo Isreb	Communications Intern
Fabiola Casas	Equity Associate