

MEETING SUMMARY

Subject: Community Advisory Group (CAG) Meeting #31

Date and Time: Thursday, December 14th, 2023 / 4:00 – 6:00pm

Location: IBR Office, Zoom Meeting, and YouTube Livestream

Number of concurrent YouTube viewers: 24

OUTCOMES

- Reminder of the IBR Equity & Climate Frameworks.
- Individual reflection for the vision of the program area.
- Discuss visions for the program area and community post-construction, aligned with Community Values and Priorities.

WELCOME & PROGRAM UPDATE

Johnell Bell, Community Advisory Group (CAG) co-facilitator, opened the meeting and invited Lisa Keohokalole Schauer, CAG co-facilitator, to welcome the group as well. Bell reviewed instructions to access closed captioning, meeting participation tips, ASL interpretation reminders, public input instructions, and CAG meeting space reminders. Frank Green, Interstate Bridge Replacement (IBR) Assistant Program Administrator, provided participants attending in person a safety briefing. Bell continued by reviewing an agenda for the meeting and asked Ed Washington and Lynn Valenter, CAG co-chairs, to further welcome the group and invite CAG member to introduce themselves by answering a prompt: *what goals or aspirations do you have as we approach the new year?*

Green began by sharing ways the program has been active and invited attendees to review the list of community presentations that have taken place recently, highlighting neighborhood associations, advisory committees and a multilingual listening session in partnership with some of the program's community-based organizations mini-grant recipients. Green highlighted the pivotal role of advisory groups such as the CAG in recommending other groups and communities to engage with for disseminating information about IBR.

Green continued by describing some of the IBR program's focus, which includes continued community engagement in early 2024 to prepare the public for the release of the Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS) and the 60-day public comment period following the release. He shared that the IBR program team wants to ensure community groups know how and where to provide public comment. After the Draft SEIS public comment period, IBR will continue to work with advisory groups as IBR progresses towards the Final SEIS. Green explained that in the Final SEIS, all public comments received will receive a response.

Next, Green shared other recent program updates. He stated that the program is still awaiting announcement for the Mega Grant, which is expected to be announced early 2024. Green explained the program submitted this federal grant with a request for \$600 million, recognizing IBR may not be granted the full amount. Green also noted that a month ago IBR applied for a Bridge Investment Program (BIP) grant, which is expected to be announced a little further into the first quarter of next year, or potentially mid-year. Green stated the program team feels positive about both grant submissions and expects to be competitive applicants. He mentioned that CAG members will receive prompt updates of the outcome once the announcements are made. Additionally, Green highlighted Governor Inslee's visit, which garnered substantial attendance from local partners, despite the rainy weather. Furthermore, he mentioned ongoing discussions with the Bi-State Legislative Committee. He explained that meeting frequency would vary based on the legislative sessions. He informed CAG that the next meeting is scheduled for December 15th and will cover more details related to the Draft SEIS.

Green paused for questions.

CAG member question: Can you remind us of the amount for the BIP grant application?

- Green response: The program was targeting a combined \$1.5 billion between both grants, but applied for more assuming full amounts will not be granted. The Mega Grant was an application for \$600 million and the BIP application was for \$1.5 billion. The BIP is a bigger grant and process than the Mega Grant. The total amount applied for between the two grants is \$2.1 billion.

CAG member question: Can you provide an update about how things are going with the Coast Guard?

- Green response: The program is involved with the Coast Guard to secure permits which are needed to move into construction. The target for starting construction in the water is 2026. To do that, a permit needs to be secured by late 2025. We have been closely coordinating with the Coast Guard, the US Army Corps of Engineers and potentially impacted river users. We're hoping to land on a fixed bridge design that meets the needs of those navigating the river. Both movable and fixed bridge designs are in the Draft SEIS and being studied. If determined that a fixed bridge design will allow for river navigation needs, the Coast Guard can provide a preliminary navigation clearance determination. The target to receive that clearance is in the third or fourth quarter of next year. We have a productive partnership to advance with the Coast Guard.

Valenter introduced the next agenda item, history of the program area, acknowledging that while CAG members might have previously seen the information, emphasizing the programs area's history remains crucial. This aims to underscore an essential baseline understanding of the local area.

Bell appreciated Valenter's comments and stated he will go through the information relatively quickly considering most CAG members have already seen much of the material. He emphasized that to do a visioning exercise that looks into the future, it is important to look at the past.

Washington question: The last speaker spoke about the Coast Guard, which comes up quite a bit. Can you briefly speak on why the Coast Guard's participation is so important?

- Green response: One of the key considerations that our program needs to make in the effort to replace the bridge is who are the impacted users, which includes those navigating the river. We must ensure people using the river have their needs addressed. The Army Corps oversees the channels and ensures navigable channels are upheld. Simultaneously, the Coast Guard is examining similar aspects and is interested in the height requirement for river traffic. The IBR program interacts with various transportation modes, requiring appropriate permits to be acquired. The Coast Guard stands as a crucial federal partner.

Bell asked if there were any other questions for Green before moving on.

HISTORY OF THE PROGRAM AREA

Bell began by providing an overview of key points he would be covering including historical context of Indigenous Peoples, the Portland Assembly Center (commonly known as the Portland Expo Center), Vanport floods, and community displacement within the region. Bell highlighted that much of this information has been unpacked in the three years CAG has convened and is shared from both an equity and historical perspective. He also mentioned that CAG co-chair Ed Washington lived in Vanport during the floods and has shared his own story with the group in the past. Bell emphasized the purpose is to bear in mind the historical context as the group envisions the future. He stated that this information is also important from a community engagement perspective and for the program to consider how to best engage with community members with histories of trauma.

Bell provided an overview of the program corridor history relative to Vancouver, highlighting Indigenous peoples, military and trading, industrialization, the “great suburban expansion” and the “suburban-to-urban transition”. Much of the equity analysis has shown changes in Vancouver’s demographic landscape, including a shift in land use and urban development, and is being taken into consideration as the program gains an understanding of how communities use the bridge.

Bell further described historical context related to Indigenous Peoples in the region. Indigenous people have lived and traveled in the region since time immemorial. They describe the trauma and decimation encountered when U.S. government forced Indigenous people onto reservations, which were not great places for those communities. The area along the Columbia River remains significant to Indigenous communities today. From this understanding of history, the program is working to advance equity by consulting and coordinating with 10 federally recognized Tribal Governments.

Next, Bell described a brief history of the Portland Assembly Center (also known as the Portland Expo Center). The history of this North Portland building is intertwined with Japanese Americans residing along the Pacific Coast and their internment following the attack on Pearl Harbor in the 1940s. Bell mentioned that Metro is currently holding discussions related to what might happen with the Portland Expo Center.

Bell continued by describing key historical points related to the 1948 Vanport flood. Vanport was a predominantly African American community that became displaced due to the flood. Bell invited Washington to contribute commentary and shared a personal anecdote about his own family's experience with this event. He stated the impact of the flood is an example of what can happen when infrastructure fails and highlighted the importance of building with resiliency in mind. Bell also described the connection to the flood's adverse impacts and current inequities due to policies rooted in systemic racism, such as redlining.

Bell described the process IBR's Equity Advisory Group (EAG) underwent to develop a program definition of Equity Priority communities and how data analysis using those demographic indicators resulted in an equity index mapping tool. Bell described the *Equity Priority Communities Map in Washington* by explaining that higher proportions of equity priority groups are shown in darker shades and stated that the map tells an interesting story. He noted that the map shown is on the Washington side, but similar maps exist for Oregon.

Next, Bell explained the practice of redlining in Portland, which was not unique to the city or state but occurred across the country and negatively impacted communities of color by excluding them from real estate opportunities. This — coupled with the way in which transportation projects cut through and divided communities of color — led the program and other transportation projects in the area to consider how to advance equity in consideration of this history.

Finally, Bell shared other regional history related to infrastructure projects and their adverse effect on local Black communities. The primary example provided was the displacement of the Albina neighborhood as the Memorial Coliseum and the I-5 through South Albina was constructed. Bell highlighted the connection of compounding trauma in communities to negative health outcomes, which should be considered as decisions are made moving forward.

Bell concluded by reiterating that delving into regional history helps the group grasp the narratives shaping the program corridor as they envision its future. He then invited Shannon Singleton, IBR Community Benefits Lead, to present the next section.

OVERVIEW OF EQUITY AND CLIMATE FRAMEWORKS, COMMUNITY VALUES AND PRIORITIES

Singleton began by presenting an overview of the IBR Equity Framework so the group can have those available as they prepare for the visioning exercise. She stated the four equity principles which include acknowledging, honoring and applying lessons learned from history and current events; identifying and addressing disparities; when permissible, using existing laws and regulations as the floor rather than the ceiling; and prioritizing contract equity and economic justice.

Additionally, Singleton asked the group to hold onto components of IBR's Climate Framework. These include resilience and adaptation; transportation options that reduce greenhouse gasses in support of Oregon and Washington State goals; and minimizing carbon during construction.

Finally, Singleton provided a review of the Community Values and Priorities CAG previously identified, asking members to use this to inform their visioning work. Singleton highlighted the following values and priorities: centering equity & avoiding further harm; protecting natural resources; and transportation facilities that reflect the needs of all ages & abilities and remove barriers, including language.

Singleton invited CAG members to move into discussion with the following prompts: What is the future state of our communities in the program area when construction is complete? Which specific elements align with the guidance outlined in our CAG values and priorities? What items address the guidance from the equity and climate framework?

Singleton provided an example of responses and gave logistical instructions for the exercise.

Washington comment: Before we move, I really appreciate the wonderful pictures that we had the opportunity to see to help us understand the devastation that [has] occurred [in the region]. You likely don't have a picture, but if you could see South Portland from around the Willamette River to the present-day Interstate 405, and Market St. to the Ross Island Bridge, when the City of Portland destroyed the area, it was predominantly a Jewish neighborhood. It all needs to be talked about because [this type of destruction] happens often during government work. I hope we keep that in mind also as we move into the group exercise.

- Singleton response: Thank you so much.

Keohokalole Schauer restated which CAG members were in person and reminded staff online she would help organize small groups in person. She reiterated the breakout instructions, highlighting that this visioning exercise is being conducted by the other two advisory groups, and then inquired if there were any clarifying questions. No questions were raised, prompting CAG members to transition into their designated breakout groups.

LARGE GROUP REPORT-OUT

Keohokalole Schauer welcomed the group back and invited a representative from each small group to share two key takeaways.

CAG member: The first one is that we know this economic development will lead to growth and gentrification, and potentially affecting the well-being of families with lower income in the program area. How does the IBR program help participate in this conversation and ensure it stays in the forefront of the discussions? The second takeaway is around transportation, specifically for walkability to ensure that non-car users can move smoothly through the area and get to their destinations safely. Another important takeaway, which I often hear from community members, is for a reduction in traffic. In a future state, when the construction is complete is that we can commute to our destinations and connect with resources in a reasonable amount of time.

Keohokalole Schauer asked if anyone else meeting in person would like to share additional takeaways, then moved on to the group online.

CAG member: We were similar to the first group but had a slightly more positive spin on the ability of the bridge to be a communicator and share history in a way that helps us prevent making the same mistakes. This included having lots of signage to help educate about the people who were here before us, those that are here now, and those that will be here in the future. Seeing the bridge as more of a connection between the two sides of the river and having people be able to get across quicker, no matter their mode of transportation. That they can move faster, whether they are freight haulers, or commuters or tourists, so that they are able to get home quicker to spend time with their families and do things that are important to them. Having the bridge presents more opportunities to move more freight more freely, potentially create more jobs and a more diverse workforce, lots more apprenticeship opportunities and the ability to help lift the community through those job opportunities. One of the things that I found fascinating as someone who lives and breathes transportation is that there are not a lot of opportunities to educate the public on how transportation is funded. This can be a really great opportunity to educate taxpayers so they can better understand how the transportation funding system works. So, using the bridge as a connection, a way to move people and products, as well as a learning opportunity.

- Keohokalole Schauer comment: Those are excellent. Thank you.

CAG member: We talked about this from an economic perspective and economic development. Then we dove into what we need to watch out for. And what are the positive goals. The positive ones are giving water access to Native Americans, especially in the Oregon side, because currently they do not have it. Another one is to give gay people a platform on the Washington side by giving them support from the Oregon side, that would be a positive impact. The things to watch are the ecological impact due to having more motorized vehicles crossing, which may impact air quality negatively and the health of communities on both sides. Hopefully the environmental impact statement being released will consider this. Those were our main points.

- Keohokalole Schauer comment: Thank you.

Keohokalole Schauer asked if anyone else would like to share additional thoughts.

CAG member: I will add one topic that was on my plate in terms of envisioning the future. Water access is an important one for North Portland. There is no existing water access along the North Portland Harbor that is not privately held. So, a community park with public access to the water is important for North Portland. And I think it would be a valuable economic destination point for the Portland community. If there was a place to bring your canoe from inner SE and drop it into the river to go canoeing, this can bring a destination place for a lot of Portlanders and bring more restaurants or other economic opportunities where those are currently lacking. North Waterfront Park is what we are pushing for.

Keohokalole Schauer reminded the group that they were asked to take into consideration the EAG and Climate frameworks, and CAG Community Values and Priorities. She reflected that she heard words that CAG members used that echo those commitments, such as *economic equity, housing, access, accessibility*. She stated that the vision seems to be in alignment with previous group commitments and the message back to the CBAG will be that the group is excited to see how this work will continue to develop.

CAG member: I would just add that parts of the conversation that revolved around congestion reduction, which is a huge goal and part of the purpose and need, was part of something that was covered, no matter the mode of transportation. Congestion reduction piece was huge for all of us.

- Keohokalole Schauer comment: There were some stories told about getting here related to congestion.
- CAG member comment: I appreciated that in our group, that [congestion] kept getting pointed out. I appreciate the variety of elements that we always want to keep front and center. That is what we must lead with. Increasing capacity and having choices getting across the river is important.
- CAG member comment: That is key to this discussion. Sometimes we lose that when looking at the bigger picture. The goal is to create an appropriate amount of capacity to move freely. It's so positive from the environmental, personal life, and freight standpoint. That is the goal, and we need to keep that front and center.

CAG member comment: My sister recently moved to Brooklyn, and they have been talking about utilizing tolling and congestion pricing in and around tunnels or pathways entering Manhattan. It's important to center equity to provide support to folks who may find it as an inhibitor from getting from point A to point B in the most efficient way possible. We need to make sure we're not pricing people out from the opportunity to cross the bridge.

- CAG member comment: Trying to get to Vancouver from Portland at 4pm is not easy. If we do an in-person meeting in the future, rethink the timing of the meeting.

Washington comment: I need to go to another meeting, but I appreciate the point about signage to let folks know about the history of the area.

Keohokalole Schauer transitioned to provide dates for upcoming advisory group meetings and gratitude to staff for their logistical support. Next, she shared public comment instructions. No public comment provided. Schauer invited Green to share closing thoughts.

Green shared an appreciation to the CAG members for continued engagement and their participation in the evening's visioning exercise.

Johnell Bell echoed gratitude for three years of participation. He said he looks forward to a robust 2024 and continued dialogue for community benefits.

Valenter shared words of gratitude and closed the meeting.

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION

Below are notes from each small group discussion:

Highlights from Group 1's discussion:

Avoid Further Harm:

- Economic development and its potential impact on communities with low income: How does the IBR program engage in conversations about potential displacement caused by development during the design process?
- Tolling implementation: Ensuring tolls don't place an undue economic burden on individuals.
- Data collection on traffic/congestion and emissions: Understanding emissions resulting from vehicles stuck in traffic versus expanding lanes to mitigate congestion.

Community Benefits:

- The role of parks and open spaces in fostering economic growth in the community.

Mobility and Accessibility:

- Walkability: Ensuring accessible corridors for non-car users, encouraging alternative modes of transportation, especially for young people commuting to destinations like the mall and Portland via buses and Max.
- Safety across all transportation modes: Ensuring safety for car users, cyclists, and public transit riders.
- Addressing congestion issues: Streamlining travel throughout the region for various activities, aiming to reduce travel times, ensuring it's not more time-consuming to travel short distances within the region than longer distances outside the area.

The highlights from Group 2's discussion:

Avoid Further Harm:

- The importance of avoiding harm to Black and Native Americans, ensuring that construction doesn't exacerbate existing issues.
- From the business community, the need for adequate lead time and clear communication about changes affecting businesses, such as altered hours, new rules, street changes, or fees. Timely communication was highlighted as critical feedback from business listening sessions.

Community Benefits:

- Enhancing public access to the water, emphasizing the visual appeal and creating designated areas for people to touch the water. Special attention should be given to Indigenous tribes and cultural uses of the water for ceremonies.
- Creating an environment that attracts the local and Portland LGBTQ+ community, noting the absence of a significant draw for this community to Vancouver beyond the annual Pride event.

Mobility and Accessibility:

- Find ways to make the Vancouver Waterfront attractive and accessible to the LGBTQ+ community. Enhancing public access to the water, emphasizing the visual appeal, and creating designated areas for people to touch the water.

Highlights from Group 3's discussion:

Avoiding Further Harm:

- Proper signage reflecting Indigenous or other historical information at various places.
- Need for comprehensive information beyond just pavement details.
- Provide education on public transportation.

Community Benefits:

- Proposal for historical signage and pictorial representations for better understanding.
- Highlighting the bridge's significance as a vital component for transportation and economic necessity.

Mobility and Accessibility:

- Bridging opportunities for diverse walks of life, emphasizing possibilities and economic potentials.
- Enhancing freight capacity for job creation and workforce diversity, benefiting both sides of the river.
- Promoting environmental benefits by facilitating easier movement, reducing greenhouse gases, and fostering better family connectivity.
- Wide, well-paved sidewalks to facilitate the smooth passage of two wheelchairs simultaneously.

PUBLIC COMMENT

No public comment was provided.

ATTENDEES

CAG Member Participants

Participants	Organization
Brooke Pillsbury	Clark College
Darcy Hoffman	Workforce SW WA
Dena Horton	PNWA
Ed Washington	CAG Co-Chair
Gerina Hatch	Community in Motion
Hayley Watson	Oregon State Building and Construction Trade Council
Irina Phillips	At-large Community Member

Participants	Organization
Jana Jarvis	Oregon Trucking Association
Jay Clark	Portland Metro Chamber
Julie Doumbia	At-large Community Member
Lynn Valenter	CAG Co-Chair
Marcus Mundy	Coalition of Communities of Color
Martha Wiley	Public Transit Representative - WA
Mikaela Williams	At-large Community Member
Tom Hickey	Bridgeton Neighborhood Association
Tom Sandhwar	At large Community Member

Facilitators and Presenters

Staff Name	Role
Frank Green	IBR Assistant Program Administrator
Lisa Keohokalole Schauer	IBR CAG Co-Facilitator
Johnell Bell	IBR CAG Co-Facilitator
Shannon Singleton	IBR Community Benefits Lead

Additional Attendees

- Brenda Siragusa, IBR staff, notetaker
- Fabian Hidalgo Guerrero, IBR CAG Lead
- Eric Trinh, IBR staff, notetaker
- Fabiola Casas, IBR Equity Team, notetaker

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- Salomé Chimuku, IBR Community Engagement Lead
- Yemaya Hall-Ruiz, IBR staff, break out group facilitator
- Zander Arnold, IBR staff, tech support
- ASL interpreters: Andrea and Amanda
- Close Captioner: Juline Bajada

MEETING RECORDING AND MATERIALS

Meeting Recording

<https://youtube.com/live/9nS6rpTtCYc?feature=share>

Meeting Materials

<https://www.interstatebridge.org/get-involved-folder/calendar/cag-december-14-2023-meeting/>