

MEETING SUMMARY

Subject: Community Advisory Group (CAG) Meeting #35

Date and Time: Thursday, May 9th, 2024 / 4:00 – 6:00pm

Location: Zoom Meeting and YouTube Livestream

Number of concurrent YouTube viewers: 41

OUTCOMES

- Receive an update on recent program activities.
- Receive an update on tolling activities in preparation for providing feedback to toll subcommittee.
- Receive an update on Community Benefits Advisory Group work.
- Review and discuss Community Engagement activities, including an overview of recent events and upcoming events for the summer. Discuss opportunities for CAG members to collaborate with the Community Engagement team for tabling events.

WELCOME & PROGRAM UPDATE

Johnell Bell, CAG co-facilitator, opened the meeting and provided introductory comments. Bell then asked Ed Washington and Lynn Valenter, CAG co-chairs, to further welcome the group and invited CAG members to introduce themselves by answering a prompt: *What's something you couldn't go a week without?*

Greg Johnson, Program Administrator for the Interstate Bridge Replacement (IBR) program, highlighted the program's external involvement and recent activities. He encouraged participants to visit the IBR website for updates and engagement opportunities regarding the Bi-State Tolling Subcommittee for the IBR program. The Bi-State Tolling Subcommittee last met on April 19th and will next meet on May 23rd. This group is a crucial part of the discussions on tolling for the IBR program. The program's community engagement efforts continue, including recent meetings with the HINooN (Hayden Island), Rose Village, and Bridgeton Neighborhood Associations. Additionally, the IBR program engaged with young people at Vancouver I-Tech Prep to inform them about the IBR program and attended the Ruckelshaus breakfast at Washington State University (WSU) Vancouver, to discuss regional issues and conflict resolution. The IBR program also participated in the Port of Vancouver Spring Tenant Event to share program information. Johnson continued and shared the IBR program's efforts to finalize the Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (DSEIS). He noted the adjustments to the program's timeline, emphasizing the importance of understanding the timing of this key milestone that is critical to the program's progression. He discussed ongoing collaborations with the Federal Transit Administration and Federal Highway Administration to refine the draft SEIS to better meet the needs of both the program and the community. The Draft SEIS is expected to be released later this year, pending necessary federal reviews. The Industry Day event at Metro's Expo Center in North Portland was a success, with over 300 participants. Johnson shared the program presented the draft delivery plan, including package sizing and various delivery methods (e.g., design-bid-build, design-build, construction manager/general contractor, progressive design-build). The event received positive feedback, and follow-up work is ongoing. Lastly, an Equity Roundtable hosted by the IBR program focused on active transportation will be held on May 21st.

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During the Q&A, a CAG member highlighted the program's successful participation in a recent trade show at the Oregon Convention Center, commending the team's efforts. Johnson reiterated the program's commitment to community engagement and encouraged suggestions for future events. Johnson also mentioned a visit from Christopher Coes, the USDOT Acting Under Secretary for Policy, during the APTA Mobility Conference, who praised the program's equity and community engagement efforts. CAG members asked about the impact of a recent bridge collapse in Maryland on funding, the timeline for public feedback on the draft SEIS, and the potential impact of the upcoming election on the program. Johnson assured members that the grant application remains unaffected, estimated a fall release for the DSEIS with a 60-day public comment period, and expressed confidence in the program's bipartisan support.

TOLLING UPDATE

Meghan Hodges, IBR Community and Government Relations Manager, began her presentation with a recap of the October update and shared slides in preparation for next month's tolling feedback meeting. She emphasized that tolling is part of a broader funding strategy, including federal grants and state contributions, and is solely for funding the bridge. Hodges highlighted the benefits of tolling when combined with the program's multimodal approach, which includes improved reliability and reduced congestion, multimodal access, and helping meet climate goals. Meghan also shared information about analysis of toll rates and policies completed by the IBR program to date, and the process for upcoming analysis. It was then shared that staff from the WSDOT toll division would come to the next CAG meeting to share 'what it's like to be a customer' and answer questions. Staff supporting the Bi-State Toll Subcommittee will also come to next month's meeting to get feedback on toll rates and policies before the upcoming tolling analysis that will begin this summer.

During the Q&A, CAG members raised questions about various aspects of tolling, including its impact on freight as well as whether the \$6 billion cost estimate is still the program's estimate, and about whether or not that estimate accounted for inflation. Johnson responded that a new cost estimate would be available by early summer 2025 and confirmed that inflation is accounted for in current estimates. Hodges explained that toll rates and policies are set by the Transportation Commissions and suggested providing feedback on truck rates in the next CAG meeting. The next CAG meeting will include staff from both the Oregon and Washington Transportation Commissions and the Washington State Department of Transportation's Toll Division to discuss tolling logistics and gather feedback. Hodges addressed concerns about toll enforcement and evasion, noting that these issues would be further discussed in the next meeting. She clarified that tolling is planned to start on the existing bridge in 2026 and that decisions on toll rates and exemptions will be finalized by late 2025. The presentation highlighted the need for tolling to fund construction loans and ongoing operations and maintenance. Hodges also acknowledged concerns about long-term tolling and its impact on the community, stating that toll rates would be reassessed annually, and future decisions would depend on legislative direction and funding needs.

CBAG UPDATE

Aidan Gronauer, IBR Assistant Director of Civil Rights and Equity, provided an overview of work completed over the past several months by the Community Benefits Advisory Group (CBAG). Gronauer started with September 2023 where the group was introduced to the topic of community benefits, discussed roles and responsibilities, and set the stage for future discussions. Over the next months, they adopted the CBAG Charter and discussed

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various potential community benefits, such as mobility and accessibility, and how these could impact the local community when implemented.

By early 2024, CBAG had confirmed their first set of recommendations on time-sensitive community benefits and continued to refine their focus through presentations on the IBR workforce study and potential benefits in various categories like workforce equity, economic opportunity, and physical design. Initial recommendations include transit service improvements, bike amenities, active transportation facilities, green spaces, anti-graffiti designs, new technology, transit-oriented development, affordable housing, a community benefit dashboard, and off-street parking for contractors, to name a few.

During the Q&A, a CAG member asked about the decision-making process for expedited feedback. Johnson explained that recommendations will be reviewed by various groups before final approval by the program and DOTs. Shannon Singleton, CBAG Lead, added that technical teams helped determine the need for expedited recommendations for potential community benefits that could be included in environmental documents. A CAG member inquired about anti-graffiti measures. Johnson explained that strategies include public art, plantings, and anti-graffiti coatings to keep the space attractive and free of graffiti.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT UPDATE

Salomé Chimuku, IBR Community Engagement Lead, provided an update on the program’s community engagement efforts from January to mid-March. She highlighted that the team engaged the public 45 times through presentations, interviews, tours, office hours, public briefings, listening sessions, community forums, and events related to Community-Based Organization (CBO) mini-grants. Eight CBOs were awarded funds via the second round of the miniature grant program, which represented different equity priority communities. They collectively held seven listening sessions and two community forums with 235 participants, 97% of whom identified as a member of an equity priority community. Feedback from these sessions indicated that community members had difficulty understanding the environmental evaluation process and were interested in topics such as safety, earthquake resiliency, economic impacts, tolling, traffic, and bridge design. The community engagement team plans to incorporate this feedback by improving event formats, increasing direct outreach, and enhancing communication. Future engagement opportunities include public briefings, listening sessions, and equity roundtables to support the release of the Draft SEIS.

During the discussion, CAG members emphasized the need for visualization tools, data on public awareness of the IBR program, and information on traffic patterns during construction. Chimuku noted that the team would address these concerns and continue refining their engagement strategies.

PUBLIC COMMENT

No public comment.

CAG Member Participants

Participants	Organization
Dena Horton	PNWA

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Participants	Organization
Ed Washington	CAG Co-Chair
Hayley Watson	Oregon State Building Trades
Irina Phillips	At-large Community Member
Jana Jarvis	Oregon Trucking Association
Julie Doumbia	At-large Community Member
Lynn Valenter	CAG Co-Chair
Martha Wiley	Public Transit Representative - WA
Sam Kim	At-large Community Member
Steve Barnett	Tribal Council - Cowlitz Indian Tribe
Tom Hickey	Bridgeton Neighborhood Association
Tom Sandhwar	Clark College
Zachary Lauritzen	Oregon Walks

Facilitators and Presenters

Staff Name	Role
Greg Johnson	IBR Program Administrator
Johnell Bell	IBR CAG Co-facilitator
Lisa Keohokalole Schauer	IBR CAG Co-facilitator
Meghan Hodges	IBR Community and Government Relations Manager
Aidan Gronauer	IBR Assistant Director of Civil Rights and Equity
Salome Chimuku	IBR Community Engagement Lead
Shannon Singleton	IBR Community Benefits Lead

Additional Attendees

- Fabian Hidalgo Guerrero, CAG Lead

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- Robert Arreola, IBR staff, tech support
- ASL interpreters: Amanda and Heather
- Close Captioner: Jamie Pellegrino

MEETING RECORDING AND MATERIALS

Meeting Recording

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s-vux1yoCuM>

Meeting Materials

<https://www.interstatebridge.org/get-involved-folder/calendar/cag-may-9-2024-meeting/>