

MEETING SUMMARY

Subject: Community Advisory Group (CAG) Meeting #39

Date and Time: Thursday, October 10th, 2024 / 4:00 – 6:00pm

Location: Zoom Meeting and YouTube Livestream

Number of Concurrent YouTube viewers: 14

OUTCOMES

- Receive an update on recent program activities.
- Review key findings from the Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS) with technical staff.
- Discuss Community Benefits Advisory Group (CBAG) recommendations for the 'Avoid Further Harm' category. Gather feedback from CAG members to refine these recommendations.

WELCOME & PROGRAM UPDATE

Lisa Keohokalole Schauer and Johnell Bell, CAG co-facilitators, opened the meeting and provided introductory comments. Keohokalole Schauer welcomed Ed Washington and Lynn Valenter, CAG co-chairs. Washington and Valenter then welcomed everyone and invited members of the group to introduce themselves.

Greg Johnson, Program Administrator for the Interstate Bridge Replacement (IBR) program, announced the release of the Draft SEIS for public comment, which will be open until November 18th. He also shared the public can join the IBR program in-person for two upcoming events that will serve as both a public hearing and a drop-in format open house. Additionally, he mentioned the Section 106 online open house and public comment period on the Determination of Eligibility and Finding of Effect forms for historic properties will begin on October 18th and last through November 18th. Johnson encouraged the community to provide specific comments on the Draft SEIS and the Section 106 documents, emphasizing that only comments submitted through the official channels would be considered part of the public record.

During the Q&A, CAG members raised concerns about the accessibility of the Draft SEIS - noting the difficulty for community members without technical backgrounds to provide meaningful feedback. Johnson suggested using the search function in the electronic document can help locate specific topics of interest, such as active transportation. He also highlighted that the 60-day public comment period allows extra time for community members to review the Draft SEIS, with virtual and in-person events and office hours available for support. Another concern was whether feedback needed to reference specific SEIS sections. For example, a CAG member asked if comments on the bridge height required exact citations. Johnson mentioned that specific citations are helpful but not needed. He also added that the bridge design would include ADA-compliant switchback ramps to ensure accessibility. Lastly, a CAG member asked if tolling concerns could be addressed during the Draft SEIS public comment period. Johnson explained that while tolling feedback is welcome, the tolling subcommittee is the best forum for those discussions, as it sets toll rates, policies, discounts and exemptions.

SNAPSHOT OF THE DRAFT SUPPLEMENTAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT (SEIS) KEY FINDINGS

Hannah Williams, IBR Community Engagement Manager, presented survey results showing that CAG members were most interested in the following Draft SEIS findings: transportation (92%), climate (69%), equity (61%), economics (61%), ecosystems (61%), and navigation (46%). She detailed the program's outreach goals for the Draft SEIS public comment period, such as increasing public awareness and engagement, particularly among equity priority communities, and ensuring community members know how to provide feedback on the Draft SEIS. In-person and virtual public hearings are scheduled in October and all public comments will be summarized in early 2025 and included in the Final SEIS.

Ryan LeProwse, IBR Transportation Lead, presented the Draft SEIS transportation findings, focusing on safety, vehicle trips, travel times, congestion, and transit ridership. He shared nearly 1,800 crashes that occurred within the I-5 study area between 2015-2029. Short merging areas, limited shoulders, and bridge lifts are contributing factors to the corridor's crash rate which is three times higher than the state average for comparable facilities. Under the Modified Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA), with its auxiliary lanes and ramp improvements, crashes are reduced by 13-17% in comparison to the No Build Alternative which could increase crashes by 28%. LeProwse also shared the Modified LPA, which includes highway improvements, transit improvements, active transportation improvements, and tolling, would contribute to a reduction in overall vehicle trips through the IBR Program Area, which in turn would reduce congestion and delay on the order of approximately 11% and 30% compared to the No-Build Alternative for the region and traffic subarea, respectively.

During the Q&A, CAG members questioned why one direction of traffic projects greater benefits than the other despite similar enhancements like tolling and auxiliary lanes. They also questioned why 2045 projections show longer southbound congestion than northbound congestion and requested data on the 2024 No Build Alternative for clarity. LeProwse shared the peak hours are similar, but the length of congestion varies, noting further details are available in the technical reports. A CAG member also asked about travel time uncertainty and LeProwse responded that heat maps and summaries provide estimated travel times.

Rebecca Steiner, IBR Environmental Team, presented the economic and equity findings. She shared the benefits of the Modified LPA include improved freight mobility and better access to economic opportunities for all demographics due to reduced travel times. However, the Modified LPA results in impacts, such as job losses and reduced property tax revenue from residential and business displacements. She noted additional displacement would occur if certain ramps were removed or if the I-5 mainline is shifted westward. Regarding equity, she said the program is expected to reduce travel times and improve job access for all demographic groups, particularly with the inclusion of two auxiliary lanes. However, residential displacement, tolling-related transportation costs, and construction impacts, like traffic diversion, noise, and dust could disproportionately affect equity priority communities.

During the Q&A, CAG members inquired about the loss of jobs resulting from displaced businesses, asking if it is assumed that those businesses will relocate and retain their employees. Steiner explained that the job loss figures represent a conservative estimate, assuming that in some cases, businesses may not be able to relocate

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or find a new location. However, the hope is that the program will assist these businesses in relocating, allowing them to continue operations and retain their employees. This projection represents a worst-case scenario.

Emma Johnson, IBR Environmental Team, presented the climate change and ecosystem findings of the Modified LPA compared to the No Build Alternative. The Modified LPA would increase the use of low- and zero-emission transportation modes, lowering energy consumption and reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 2045. Specifically, it would decrease weekday vehicle miles traveled and slightly reduce carbon dioxide emissions from roadway operations. The program also aims to improve climate resilience through materials and design. Regarding ecosystems, bridge removal and replacement under the Modified LPA would permanently affect sensitive aquatic habitats in the Columbia River and North Portland Harbor. Two mitigation sites are being evaluated to offset these natural resource impacts, subject to approval by regulatory agencies. Additionally, the Draft SEIS outlines potential mitigation measures, including regulatory compliance, best management practices, and program-specific strategies.

During the Q&A, CAG members asked if the program was taking credit for emission reductions from electric vehicles and solar energy projects, which aren't directly part of the IBR program. It was clarified that these reductions would occur in both the No Build and Modified LPA scenarios, so they are not specific to the program. Another question focused on whether the program has analyzed the racial identities or demographics of affected businesses as part of the Draft SEIS. Johnson responded that the Draft SEIS considers business impacts to ensure no disproportionate effects. CAG members raised several questions about how to maximize the impact of public comments. One question asked whether neighborhood associations should submit one unified letter or have individual members send separate letters to increase their influence. The response clarified that while all comments are important, it's the substance, not the volume, that carries the most weight. Separate comments are welcome but not necessary. Another question concerned whether this is the right time to comment on future proofing on the program for transit expansions. The response affirmed that now is the time to raise these concerns, as future transit needs are being considered.

CBAG RECOMMENDATIONS: AVOID FURTHER HARM

Emilee Thomas-Peralta, IBR Equity Team, presented on the "Avoid Further Harm" category within the IBR program's community benefits, emphasizing harm reduction over mitigation for historically impacted and underserved communities and populations. The discussion focused on recommendations to minimize impacts during construction, such as maintaining river access for Native communities, inspecting properties to establish baseline conditions, and increasing public transit services to mitigate impacts on mobility. Other proposed recommendations included proactive communication about potential impacts, establishing a system for community feedback, ensuring culturally specific outreach during real estate processes, and minimizing small business disruptions, particularly on Hayden Island. The recommendations also explored funding options for addressing homelessness and ensuring representation for equity priority communities in procurement decisions. The session concluded with discussion, asking CAG members if, from their perspective, the recommendations presented align with the CAG Community Values and Priorities.

During the Q&A, CAG members expressed the need for additional time to review the slides. They also suggested including more details about the impact on residents within the program area. The CBAG team agreed to share the slides and a survey for further review and feedback. Thomas-Peralta clarified that additional feedback

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opportunities would be available and mentioned that some recommendations potentially relevant to the program’s environmental documents had already been made by the CBAG.

PUBLIC COMMENT

A representative from the Just Crossing Alliance raised a concern about whether comments submitted through their web form, which links directly to the IBR Infobox, are being properly received. The representative mentioned that they’ve been collecting and submitting comments but haven’t received an acknowledgement from the IBR program for each submittal and sought confirmation and clarification from the IBR program.

CAG Member Participants

Participants	Organization
Bill Prows	OAME
Dena Horton	PNWA
Ed Washington	CAG Co-Chair
Gerina Hatch	Community in Motion
Irina Phillips	At-large Community Member
Jay Clark	PMC
Jon Wilson	The Vancouver Clinic, Columbia River Economic Development Council
Julie Doumbia	At-large Community Member
Lynn Valenter	CAG Co-Chair
Marcus Mundy	Coalition of Communities of Color
Mikaela Williams	At-large Community Member
Robin Richardson	At-large Community Member
Sam Kim	At-large Community Member
Tom Sandhwar	At-large Community Member
Zachary Lauritzen	Oregon Walks

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Facilitators and Presenters

Staff Name	Role
Greg Johnson	IBR Program Administrator
Johnell Bell	IBR CAG Co-facilitator
Lisa Keohokalole Schauer	IBR CAG Co-facilitator
Hannah Williams	IBR Program Staff
Ryan LeProwse	IBR Transportation Lead
Emma Johnson	IBR Environmental Team
Rebecca Steiner	IBR Environmental Team
Emilee Thomas-Peralta	IBR Equity Team

Additional Attendees

- Fabian Hidalgo Guerrero, CAG Lead
- Chris Regan, IBR Environmental Manager
- Shannon Singleton, IBR Community Benefits Lead
- Amanda Hart, IBR staff, tech support
- ASL interpreters: Andrea and Amanda
- Close Captioner: Jamie Pellegrino

MEETING RECORDING AND MATERIALS

Meeting Recording

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mNBVXH1AOSY&t=3s>

Meeting Materials

<https://www.interstatebridge.org/get-involved-folder/calendar/cag-october-10-2024-meeting/>