

MEETING SUMMARY

Subject: Community Advisory Group (CAG) Meeting #40

Date and Time: Thursday, November 14th, 2024 / 4:00 – 6:00pm

Location: Zoom Meeting and YouTube Livestream

Number of Concurrent YouTube viewers: 17

OUTCOMES

- Receive an update on recent program activities.
- Discuss Community Benefits Advisory Group (CBAG) recommendations for the 'Avoid Further Harm' category and 'Mobility & Accessibility category (Tranche 2 cont'd). Provide feedback to refine these recommendations.
- Review Snapshot of Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS) findings
- Review a summary of recent outreach efforts during the public comment period.

WELCOME & PROGRAM UPDATE

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

Greg Johnson, Program Administrator for the Interstate Bridge Replacement (IBR) program, highlighted the upcoming end of the public comment period for the Draft SEIS and Section 106, both closing on November 18th. He also shared that they have hosted two live virtual public hearings and two virtual public hearings, with good attendance. He also noted the continuation of tabling at events in the community and the IBR program is willing to show up at any events requested. Johnson encouraged the community to provide specific comments on the Draft SEIS and the Section 106 documents.

During the Q&A, a CAG member asked for clarification on whether the deadline to submit public comments on the D-SEIS aligned with the deadline for Section 106 comments. Johnson confirmed that the deadlines for both are the same.

CBAG RECOMMENDATIONS:

Johnell Bell, CAG Co-facilitator, presented the “Mobility and Accessibility” category within the IBR program’s community benefits. The recommendations focused on improving mobility, accessibility, and connectivity for lower-income travelers, people with disabilities, and historically underserved communities. Key suggestions included conducting a comparative analysis to optimize traffic flow, designing weather-protected and safe transit stations, and incorporating drought-resistant landscaping. The recommendations also emphasized expanding multi-use trails, exceeding ADA requirements through innovative solutions, and enhancing safety and functionality for bike and pedestrian paths with noise-reducing barriers. The session concluded with discussion, asking the CAG members if, from their perspective, the recommendations presented align with the CAG Community Values and Priorities.

November 14, 2024

During the Q&A, a CAG member asked whether there could be measures to encourage the use of hybrid and electric vehicles or if an emission-free vehicle lane could be positioned closer to pedestrian areas, while lanes for higher-emission vehicles are moved to the center. Johnson responded that the design includes shoulders to separate active transportation areas from traffic lanes. The D-SEIS projects a decrease in greenhouse gas emissions in the region, reflecting a shift toward cleaner vehicles, which aligns with community and program goals.

SNAPSHOT OF DRAFT SUPPLEMENTAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT (SEIS) NAVIGATION FINDINGS

Ray Mabey, IBR Assistant Program Administrator outlined navigation considerations for the Columbia River, highlighting benefits such as reducing in-water piers, increased horizontal navigation clearance to 400 feet, relocated navigation channels, reduced vessel directional changes, and improved seismic resiliency. Impacts include reduced vertical clearance to 116 feet with a fixed-span bridge and less distance for vessel alignment with bridge openings. Neutral changes include shifting the Upper Vancouver Turning Basin 350 feet west and maintaining 178-foot vertical clearance with a movable-span bridge. Mabey continued by presenting on the bridge design options and navigation adjustments for the Columbia River. He explained that the double-deck and single-level fixed-span bridges would provide 116 feet of vertical clearance, while the single-level movable-span bridge would offer 90–100 feet when closed and 178 feet when opened. Proposed navigation changes include relocating the primary channel south to align with the bridge crest, improving clearance, and shifting the North Barge Channel closer to the Washington bank to eliminate the current S-curve navigation. These adjustments aim to enhance navigation efficiency and safety.

During the Q&A, CAG members raised concerns about maintaining safe navigation during the 8-year construction period, emphasizing the need to accommodate 50 million metric tons of annual cargo. They requested clarity on how existing and new piers would align and highlighted the importance of accurate clearance measurements to account for fluctuating water levels and future climate impacts. Mabey assured members that both river and road traffic would be maintained, with close coordination with the Coast Guard and Army Corps of Engineers. Construction will progress from the south bank northward, keeping the lift span operational as long as possible, with temporary structures removed incrementally. Plans include assist tugs and tows to ensure vessel safety. Members also stressed the value of air gap sensors to help ships navigate safely under the bridge.

SUMMARY OF RECENT OUTREACH EVENTS AND NEXT STEPS FOR CLOSING OUT PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

Hannah Williams, IBR Community Engagement Manager, presented an update on Draft SEIS community engagement efforts. Key activities included hosting two virtual briefings, two in-person public hearings, and two virtual public hearings, which collectively engaged approximately 285 participants. The team delivered 53 presentations to agencies, neighborhood groups, and community organizations. They also coordinated with Community Engagement Liaisons (CELs) to connect with community members in-language through event attendance, briefings, and translation services.

November 14, 2024

Williams shared that during the comment period, the team conducted four tabling events and eight advisory committee meetings to gather input. After the comment period closes, all feedback will be reviewed, with an interim summary expected in early 2025. Responses to comments and design refinements will be incorporated into the Final SEIS, anticipated for mid to late 2025.

During the Q&A, a CAG member asked about public sentiment regarding the outreach efforts. In response, staff acknowledged the complexity of the Draft SEIS and the challenges of digesting extensive documents. They highlighted tools like the searchable online platform and office hours, which have been helpful for invested parties navigating the materials. Feedback from public hearings and open houses showed that while initial reactions were sometimes skeptical, conversations generally turned positive as attendees understood that the program is still in the early design stages. Johnson added that public presentations have been well-received, with strong interest in active transportation features and enthusiasm for moving the program forward. He also supported the idea of creating educational materials or a film documenting the program for schoolchildren, showcasing the history and community effort behind the bridge’s development.

PUBLIC COMMENT

No Public Comment.

CAG Member Participants

Participants	Organization
Dena Horton	PNWA
Ed Washington	CAG Co-Chair
Gerina Hatch	Community in Motion
Irina Phillips	At-large Community Member
Julie Doumbia	At-large Community Member
Sam Kim	At-large Community Member

Facilitators and Presenters

Staff Name	Role
Greg Johnson	IBR Program Administrator
Raymond Mabey	IBR Assistant Program Administrator
Johnell Bell	IBR CAG Co-facilitator

November 14, 2024

Staff Name	Role
Lisa Keohokalole Schauer	IBR CAG Co-facilitator
Hannah Williams	IBR Program Staff

Additional Attendees

- Fabian Hidalgo Guerrero, CAG Lead
- Amanda Hart, IBR staff, tech support
- ASL interpreters: Mary Herman & Amanda Wilkes
- Close Captioner: Lauren Shirley

MEETING RECORDING AND MATERIALS

Meeting Recording

<https://www.youtube.com/live/Ffrus5--YwQ?si=vW6lxDtIn5fStiKd>

Meeting Materials

<https://www.interstatebridge.org/get-involved-folder/calendar/cag-november-14-2024-meeting/>