

COMMUNITY BENEFITS ADVISORY GROUP (CBAG) MEETING SUMMARY #20

Date and Time: Thursday, May 22, 2025 / 9:30 – 11:30 a.m.

Location: Hybrid (In-person and Zoom meeting) and [YouTube livestream](#)

Number of concurrent YouTube viewers: 9

OUTCOMES

- CBAG members reviewed the body of their work and learned how their work will be implemented within the IBR program moving forward
- CBAG members were presented certificates in gratitude for their service to the IBR program

WELCOME

Johnell Bell, Interstate Bridge Replacement (IBR) Fair Access Officer and co-facilitator, opened the May 2025 CBAG meeting. He introduced Emilee Thomas-Peralta, Community Benefits Lead and co-facilitator. He then reviewed instructions to access closed captioning, meeting participation tips, and sign language interpretation reminders. Safety instructions were reviewed for those attending in-person. Bell then reviewed the group agreements.

Greg Johnson, IBR Program Administrator, welcomed attendees and thanked them for their participation.

Anne McEnerny-Ogle, City of Vancouver Mayor and CBAG Co-Convener, and Priya Dhanapal, City of Portland Interim Public Works Deputy City Administrator, also extended a welcome to all attendees.

Bell and Thomas-Peralta led a round of introductions by asking members to share their names, organizational affiliation or at-large status and pronouns if they wished. Members also answered a check-in question, “What’s a favorite family tradition of yours?” as part of their introductions.

Bell then provided an overview of the meeting agenda.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Bell shared information on the process for submitting CBAG public comments during and after the meeting. No comments were submitted prior to the meeting, and no members of the public provided comments during the meeting.

PROGRAM UPDATES

Johnson shared the following update on program presentations: The program continues to engage interested parties through presentations, outreach and tabling events including:

- Meet the Agencies with CREDC and APEX Accelerator
- BESThq Business Expo West STEAM Pathways Summit
- Safe from Hate Summit, Oregon Tradeswomen
- Joint CAG/EAG Meeting
- LatinoBuilt Quarterly Membership Meeting
- OAME Tradeshow
- ODOT-ACEC Partnering Conference

Additionally, Johnson shared that the Program continues to engage with local organizations and agencies, such as the Westside Economic Alliance, the Association of Women and Minority Businesses, the Hayden Island Neighborhood Network (HINooN), the Oregon Transportation Commission, the City of Portland Committee on Labor and Workforce Development and the Construction Management Association of America, Oregon Chapter.

Johnson then shared that the Program is still working towards a Record of Decision (ROD) from federal partners, and that the Program is on track to receive the ROD in early 2026. The ROD will allow the program to access the federal funds awarded to it and enter construction. Johnson described the team as incredibly focused on this endeavor. Johnson stated that there were thousands of comments on the Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS), all of which must be answered by the Program and reviewed by the federal partners.

Johnson further shared that there is also a procurement team focused on drafting and releasing contracts in early 2026 for proposers who will build the bridge. Johnson stated that there will be 28 different contracts across multiple delivery methods, including Design-Bid-Build, Progressive Design Build, and CM/GC.

Finally, Johnson shared that the Program will host workshops with the partners during the summer and advisory groups to start discussing aesthetic choices presented by Knight Architecture, which has been tasked with incorporating aesthetics into the design. Johnson then opened the floor to questions.

One CBAG member asked when the Program will report on the decisions or changes made in the Program based on public comments received on the Draft SEIS. The CBAG member cited the level of public interest in the shared use path. Johnson responded that some of the questions and comments have been noted and will be addressed later in the process as design decisions are being made. Johnson clarified that not all changes will be reflected in the Final SEIS but would instead be incorporated into later design decisions. Johnson shared that the team is researching national best practices to ensure that the path is safe, accessible, and realistically useable for people of varying abilities.

A CBAG member asked whether there are still concerns from the Coast Guard. Johnson replied that there are still concerns, and that the Program is actively engaging with impacted river users and is on the verge of

signing final agreements to help determine the final height of the bridge, which the Program can then bring to the Coast Guard to receive a new preliminary clearance determination. Johnson stated that he estimates that the updated navigation impact report will be submitted next month. Johnson shared that if the bridge must incorporate a moveable span, it would create an additional \$1 billion in capital costs and the ongoing operation costs would be higher. Johnson also shared that if the bridge features a moveable span, it would be the largest lift bridge in the world.

A CBAG member asked Johnson when he believes the ROD will be signed and shovels will be in the ground. Johnson stated he hopes the Final SEIS will be completed in December. Johnson shared that the fastest he has seen a ROD be issued after submitting the Final SEIS was 30 days and that he hopes for the ROD by the end of March 2026. Johnson stated that the in-water work window begins in Fall 2027, which is a critical window to achieve to keep the project on time.

CBAG LOOKBACK AND CELEBRATION

Thomas-Peralta expressed her appreciation for CBAG members for their contributions to the work. She provided an overview of the work achieved by the CBAG including key accomplishments. Thomas-Peralta reviewed the scope and intent of the CBAG, which was providing recommendations for community benefits to align with the community's priorities and advising the IBR Program in establishing mechanisms for accountability for commitments made from the CBAG's work.

Thomas-Peralta highlighted the balanced representation of the CBAG, including representatives from the Equity and Community Advisory Groups respectively, residents, business owners, community-based organization representatives, and various advocates, all co-convened by officials from the Cities of Portland and Vancouver. This allowed perspectives to be shared from a variety of backgrounds throughout CBAG's process.

Thomas-Peralta reviewed the CBAG's process, starting with visioning, where members considered what they want their communities to be like once the bridge is complete. During the brainstorming phase, members assembled ideas based on categories, before reviewing/refining their recommendations. The confirmation step allowed members to further refine their recommendations and vote to finalize their recommendations.

Thomas-Peralta then reviewed the key themes from CBAG's discussions, including user experience, construction impacts, considerations for implementation of recommendations, community voice, and environmental considerations. She stated that these themes emerged repeatedly across multiple discussions and throughout multiple categories of recommendations.

Thomas-Peralta highlighted the accomplishments of the CBAG. The CBAG utilized a collaborative and community-centered process to find agreement from a group with a variety of perspectives, expertise, and interests. She shared that the CBAG crafted a list of 55 focused recommendations from their initial list of over 100. She then turned to Administrator Johnson to offer his reflections.

Johnson shared that he has worked on various community benefits Programs on projects in the past and that he finds it to be one of the most rewarding areas of work. He highlighted the importance of the community having a voice in the outcome of projects. Johnson stated that the CBAG's work is a high point for the IBR Program.

NEXT STEPS

CBAG Recommendations Analysis and Decision-Making

Thomas-Peralta stated that, although the CBAG is ending as a group, it does not mean that the work they produced ends. She explained that the recommendations developed by the CBAG will move forward and shared the steps of that process.

Thomas-Peralta stated that the next phase for the recommendations is analysis. She explained that this entails working with IBR Program technical experts across all disciplines, as well as DOT and transit agency representatives, to understand the different factors that determine whether recommendations can become commitments. The key considerations during the analysis include analyzing the crossover with other aspects of the Program, such as the SEIS and mitigations, whether recommendations align with existing standard requirements or practices, which recommendations are within the scope of the agencies and considerations around timing for procurement, as well as identifying the responsible party, mechanism for implementation and funding sources. Thomas-Peralta explained that those key considerations were used to create four specific decision factors: budget feasibility, ease of implementation, level of impact on design and policy priority/outcome.

Thomas-Peralta then provided an overview of the remaining steps in the process of considering the CBAG's recommendations. After the analysis, the recommendations will move to the final decision-making by IBR Program leadership and the owner agencies to make commitments. After this, the Program will coordinate with appropriate parties for implementation, such as incorporation into design plans, third-party agreements, or contract documents. Finally, these efforts will be reflected in a Community Benefits Plan. She explained that the Community Benefits Plan will be completed after the Final SEIS is released.

Thomas-Peralta explained that progress updates on this work will be provided through future advisory groups, as well as publicly sharing the community benefits commitments. She also stated that the Community Benefits Plan will provide an overview of the CBAG process, a list of community benefits commitments, as well as information regarding the implementation and tracking of those commitments.

A CBAG member asked when the Final SEIS is expected to be released. Administrator Johnson replied December 2025.

CBAG Member Discussion

Thomas-Peralta facilitated a discussion with CBAG members to gather their reflections about their experience serving on the CBAG. The questions guiding this discussion were:

- What worked well about this process?
- What are some areas for improvement?
- What is your biggest takeaway from your experience as a CBAG member?

One CBAG member stated that they felt lost on how their recommendations were initially reviewed by IBR Program staff and how those early recommendations evolved. They also stated that they left the very first meeting of the group feeling positive about the people, tone, and productivity of the group. They credited the representatives selected to serve on the group as critical to the CBAG's success.

A CBAG member stated that the cities of Portland and Vancouver leading the group felt like a good way to bring everyone to the table. Another CBAG member stated they loved seeing the diversity of voices, and the intentionality of having Portland and Vancouver representatives come together to appreciate each side's perspective. The CBAG member added that the Program should consider timing of future advisory groups; the cadence of the meetings was not well-suited to those with traditionally timed jobs.

A CBAG member echoed the sentiment that they appreciated the diversity of the group, including elected officials and community members. They stated that the group was collegial and respectful, and it was a delight to collaborate with everyone to work toward a common goal. Another CBAG member shared appreciation for the IBR Program staff, including their excellent preparation, communication and hybrid meeting facilitation.

Another CBAG member repeated their appreciation for IBR Program staff. They shared that they believe better racial diversity could have been achieved for the group. Lastly, they shared their appreciation for their fellow CBAG members for engaging openly in discussions with positive intentions to make the bridge accessible and inclusive to all.

A CBAG member echoed the statement that the meeting format and facilitation were excellent. They also expressed appreciation for the group's attention to impacts on small businesses and property owners. They shared that they were frustrated that the chat feature online was disabled for every meeting, which limited their ability to participate in writing.

A CBAG member shared it was a great experience, but that the beginning was a difficult learning curve, especially how the IBR Program functioned and how it relates to other jurisdictions in the area. This member shared that it was noteworthy that so many jurisdictions came together for this work. Another CBAG member appreciated everyone's time they committed to the group, and they appreciated the open dialogue with agency representatives and community members to candidly discuss the issues.

A CBAG member shared they learned a lot from the experience, but they struggled to communicate the nature of their work to the general public because the list was not easily available. Another CBAG member shared that they noted that recommendations were not met with outright rejection, but instead a question of how to implement it. They shared that they hope that this attitude carries forward and that challenging recommendations are creatively assessed for how to implement them instead of being rejected immediately.

Administrator Johnson shared his appreciation for the IBR Program staff that has worked with the CBAG. He shared that this will be a good example of how the communities have come together to share what is important for the project to achieve. A CBAG member also appreciated the ASL interpretation at every meeting.

Bell provided some closing thoughts to the group, saying that the outcome of the project would have been a failure if all that was achieved was concrete and steel. Bell described the CBAG's work as an opportunity for ensuring that the project is representative of community values. He appreciated the group's commitment to join and regularly attend meetings. Bell then turned to Johnson, who presented certificates of appreciation to every CBAG member.

ATTENDEES

Attendees	Organization
CBAG Members	
Greg Johnson	IBR Program Administrator
Rian Windsheimer	Oregon Department of Transportation
Carley Francis	Washington State Department of Transportation
Anne McEnery-Ogle	City of Vancouver
Priya Dhanapal	City of Portland
Scott McCallum	Washington State School for the Blind
Peter Fels	Alliance for Community Engagement
Jayne Haygood	Vancouver Parks and Recreation Advisory Commission
Walter Valenta	At-large Community Member
Farleigh Winters	LSW Architects
Holly Williams	At-large Community Member
Michael Strahs	Kimco Realty
Vicki Nakashima	Equity Advisory Group (EAG) Representative
Siobhana R. McEwen	Southwest Washington Equity Coalition (SWEC)
Darcy Hoffman	Workforce Southwest Washington
Khanh Tran	National Association of Minority Contractors (NAMC) Oregon
Corky Collier	Columbia Corridor Association

Attendees	Role
IBR Staff	
Aidan Gronauer	Assistant Director of Civil Rights & Equity
Johnell Bell	Fair Access Officer
Grace Crunican	Executive Advisor
Josh Todd	Community Benefits Team
Emilee Thomas-Peralta	Community Benefits Lead
Fabian Hidalgo Guerrero	Community Engagement Team
Lucy Hamer	Community Benefits Team
Steve Witter	Transit Team
Caryn Urata	Transit Team
Steve Katko	Civil Design Team
Prashaant Kulkarni	Transit Team
Amanda Hart	Technical Support

Other Attendees	Organization/Agency
Brenda Martin	City of Portland
Lori Severino	City of Vancouver
Katherine Kelly	City of Vancouver
Michelle Giguere	Kimco Realty

Additional Participants

Online viewing is open to the public, partner agency staff and IBR team members. Nine participants viewed the meeting via YouTube livestream during the meeting.

MEETING RECORDING AND MATERIALS

Meeting Recording

[Community Benefits Advisory Group \(CBAG\) May 22, 2025, 9:30AM PST \(youtube.com\)](#)

Meeting Materials

The meeting materials are available here: [CBAG Meeting May 22, 2025 | Interstate Bridge Replacement Program](#)