

MEETING SUMMARY

Subject: Community Advisory Group (CAG) Meeting #38

Date and Time: Thursday, September 12th, 2024 / 4:00 – 6:00pm

Location: Zoom Meeting and YouTube Livestream

Number of concurrent YouTube viewers: 21

OUTCOMES

- Receive program update.
- Learn about the identified cultural resources under Section 106 and the information available during the public comment period.
- Receive an update of engagement opportunities for the Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS) comment period and request to share with their communities.
- Review the active transportation roll map as being studied in the Draft SEIS.

WELCOME & PROGRAM UPDATE

Johnell Bell and Lisa Keohokalole Schauer CAG co-facilitators, opened the meeting and provided introductory comments. Bell welcomed Ed Washington and Lynn Valenter, CAG co-chairs. 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 that the Draft SEIS would be published Friday, Sept. 20, initiating a 60-day public comment period. He highlighted the program's progress, including community briefings, board presentations, and tabling work. During the Q&A, CAG members asked about the IBR program's community engagement efforts, specifically whether a detailed spreadsheet tracking outreach to various groups could be shared with CAG members. Johnson acknowledged the request and mentioned that the team maintains a general list of outreach activities, which could be shared.

Members also raised concerns about the bridge's navigational clearance, especially given uncertainties around river levels due to climate change and the Columbia River Treaty. Johnson reassured them that the team is considering future river projections and working with the Coast Guard and Army Corps to address clearance concerns. He explained that both a fixed-span and a movable-span bridge are being considered, and discussions are ongoing, with a determination expected early next year.

SECTION 106 CULTURAL RESOURCES

Hayli Reff, IBR Cultural Resources Program Manager, provided an update on the Section 106 process related to historic properties and cultural resources. She explained that two key steps have been completed: identifying historic properties and assessing potential effects on them. The upcoming public comment period for Section 106 will run from Oct. 18 to Nov. 18, 2023, separate from but parallel to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process. The public can participate via an online open house and submit comments through various platforms. Reff emphasized the importance of public consultation and mitigation strategies for any adverse effects identified.

September 12, 2024

During the Q&A, CAG members asked about protocols for handling historic discoveries during construction, referencing a mammoth tusk found near Ridgefield. They inquired if such protocols would be established prior to construction. Reff explained that these procedures are outlined in the Section 106 Programmatic Agreement. This agreement, developed after NEPA completion, details processes for addressing cultural resources, including actions during construction, mitigation strategies, and ensuring public notification. It ensures all consulting parties agree on how to manage potential historic or cultural impacts.

D-SEIS PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

KaDeena Yerkan, IBR Public Affairs Lead, provided an update on the public comment period for the Draft SEIS. Yerkan announced the 60-day comment period starting September 20, emphasizing outreach efforts including social media, newsletters, and direct mail to 90,000 people. Various methods for submitting public comments were outlined, including online forms, emails, voicemails, and in-person public hearings. Yerkan also mentioned limitations on file attachments, including photos and videos, and encouraged public engagement through office hours and community events. Bell then facilitated a discussion asking CAG members two key questions: if they felt prepared to read and comment on the Draft SEIS and whether they could share information about the public comment period with their networks. Bell also asked members to identify any additional resources or support they might need from the team to help spread the word about the comment period.

During the Q&A, CAG members expressed feeling prepared to review, share, and comment on the Draft SEIS. However, concerns were raised regarding the accessibility of the content for the public, as the document is expected to be large and potentially difficult to navigate. CAG members also asked about public access to comments submitted during the public comment period, advocating for transparency in sharing them as they are received. Yerkan acknowledged the request and noted the challenge of posting comments in real-time but promised to follow up. Another member raised concerns about the project's document length and expressed interest in attending virtual briefings for more condensed information. They also inquired about how the success of public outreach would be measured, emphasizing the importance of incorporating both quantitative metrics and qualitative insights to evaluate community engagement efforts effectively.

ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION ROLL MAP

Steve Katko, IBR Design Lead presented a new active transportation roll plot, which is now available on the IBR website. This plot highlights proposed active transportation facilities, such as shared-use paths and sidewalks, along the project corridor. The tool is intended to help the public better understand the design being studied in the Draft SEIS. Upcoming videos will demonstrate how active transportation users will navigate the area. The team encouraged CAG members to explore the roll plot and share it with their communities.

During the Q&A, CAG members asked about whether the information presented would be included in the Draft SEIS being published. They also highlighted the community's strong interest in active transportation elements and encouraged fellow members to focus on specific sections relevant to their interests rather than reading the entire document. In response, Katko clarified that while images and cut sheets would be included in the Draft SEIS, the full roll plot would not be part of the document but is the best way to view it comprehensively.

PUBLIC COMMENT

A representative from the Southeast Uplift Neighborhood Coalition provided a public comment requesting the removal of file size limitations for public comment submissions during the IBR program’s public comment period. The commenter emphasized the importance of allowing attachments such as Portable Document Formats (PDFs) and sequential email comments to better facilitate community input, especially for volunteer-led groups. They expressed concern that these restrictions hinder public participation and urged for measures that would enhance trust and inclusivity in the NEPA process.

CAG Member Participants

Participants	Organization
Bill Prows	OAME
Dena Horton	PNWA
Ed Washington	CAG Co-Chair
Gerina Hatch	Community in Motion
Hayley Watson	Oregon Building Trades
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
Mikaela Williams	At-large Community Member
Sam Kim	At-large Community Member
Sheri Call	Washington Trucking Association
Tom Hickey	Bridgeton Neighborhood Association
Zachary Lauritzen	Oregon Walks

September 12, 2024

Facilitators and Presenters

Staff Name	Role
Greg Johnson	IBR Program Administrator
Johnell Bell	IBR CAG Co-facilitator
Lisa Keohokalole Schauer	IBR CAG Co-facilitator
Hayli Reff	IBR Cultural Resources Program Manager
KaDeena Yerkan	IBR Public Affairs Lead
Steve Katko	IBR Design Lead

Additional Attendees

- Fabian Hidalgo Guerrero, CAG 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=b8qfA_u2OHw

Meeting Materials

<https://www.interstatebridge.org/get-involved-folder/calendar/cag-september-12-2024-meeting/>