

INTERSTATE BRIDGE REPLACEMENT PROGRAM UPDATE

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Department: Planning & Development

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Length: 45 minutes

ISSUE STATEMENT

The Interstate Bridge Replacement Program (IBRP), formally known as the Columbia River Crossing (CRC) project will construct a new river crossing between Oregon and Washington over the Columbia River that includes I-5 highway and interchange improvements for vehicles and freight, enhanced bicycle and pedestrian facilities, high capacity transit and associated improvements, and related connections to and multi-modal enhancements of the local street network. The IBRP also incorporates transportation demand and system management measures (TDM/TSMO), including implementing tolling as both a TDM and financing tool. Metro is considered a “participating agency” in the project under NEPA guidelines.

In early 2019, discussions began about restarting the I-5 Bridge project. On August 20th, 2019 Metro Council President along with leaders from City of Portland, Multnomah County, TriMet and Port of Portland signed a letter that articulated the joint outcomes and values of the Oregon agencies. On November 18, 2019, Governor Brown and Governor Inslee announced the restarting of the I-5 Bridge project, signed a Letter of Intent, and each dedicated staff and funding to the project. In November and December of 2019, JPACT and Metro Council approved ODOT’s request to amend the MTIP to add \$9 M dollars from ODOT STIP to the project. Shortly after, ODOT and WSDOT created a project team and began engaging agency partners.

To ensure that the project reflects broader regional needs and values, ODOT and WSDOT are jointly leading the IBRP effort with eight other bi-state partner agencies that have a direct role in planning for and/or implementing future improvements: Metro, the Southwest Regional Transportation Council, TriMet, C-TRAN, the cities of Portland and Vancouver, and the Ports of Portland and Vancouver. Together, the bi-state partner agencies have convened in a series of workshops to outline a transparent and data-driven process for the project that prioritizes equity and inclusion and balances efficient use of resources with respect for changing context. President Peterson and Metro staff actively participated in the bi-state partner agency workshops that took place between January 2020 and May 2020.

The attached documents reflect initial work to develop a framework outlining the principles that set the foundation for how the bi-state partner agencies will work together and with the program team to meaningfully engage the broader community in successfully advancing program development. Ultimately, the goal of this work is to explore development of a resolution that could be adopted by the partner agencies in agreement to pursue a collaborative path forward toward shared outcomes.

ACTION REQUESTED

No formal action requested at this time. Receive a progress report on the IBRP and partner agency participation as part of the reinitiated effort and review and discuss preliminary drafts of guiding program materials. The bi-state partner agencies will explore development of a partner agreement resolution outlining project principles, values, and expectations with the Executive Steering Group this summer.

IDENTIFIED POLICY OUTCOMES

President Peterson and staff have worked with fellow bi-state agency partners to reflect the goals, objectives, and principles from the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP), Strategic Plan to Advance Racial Equity, and Climate Smart Strategy within the draft issues list and forthcoming principles and outcomes that will be brought to the Executive Steering Committee (ESC) and will ultimately guide the IBRP effort.

As a result, the attached guiding documents include reference to equity of processes and outcomes, multi-modal mobility, context-sensitive design, transportation demand and congestion management, climate change strategies, cost-effectiveness, respect for historical context, and transportation options providing safe and affordable access to jobs, education, culture and recreation.

POLICY QUESTIONS AND OPTIONS FOR COUNCIL TO CONSIDER

- Are there particular considerations that Metro Council would like to see addressed or emphasized as part of the planning process going forward?
- Are there issues, principles or outcomes that Metro Council would like to see addressed by the Executive Steering Group (ESG) and/or the Community Advisory Committee (CAC)?

STRATEGIC CONTEXT & FRAMING COUNCIL DISCUSSION

The existing I-5 bridge is a major seismic vulnerability that threatens the region's disaster resiliency and includes a roadway design that is not safe or efficient for all users. The I-5 corridor provides access for people and freight to employment areas across Portland and Vancouver. Multi-modal access to and mobility along this segment of the I-5 Corridor has been identified as a key component of meeting the transportation, economic, and livability needs of the Portland/Vancouver Region.

Metro Council approved a Locally Preferred Alternative for the Columbia River Crossing in July 2008 and the RTP identifies additional regional considerations for Mobility Corridor

#1, including the Interstate 5 bridge. In August 2019, reflecting the considerations outlined in the RTP, President Peterson joined other Oregon agency partner representatives in submitting a letter of support for re-initiating the project within the framework of identified outcomes, processes, and strategies (see Attachment A).

The purpose of the attached documents is to set a direction for the project that aligns the IBRP guiding principles and expected outcomes with those in Metro's Regional Transportation Plan, Strategic Plan to Advance Racial Equity, and Climate Smart Strategy.

These documents were developed in close coordination with staff and executive members from all 10 bi-state agency partners.

BACKGROUND

The original CRC river crossing project development process was initiated in 2005 and concluded when the program office was closed in 2014. Recognizing that critical regional improvements remained unaddressed, the Washington legislature passed SSB 5806 in 2017.

SSB 5806 directed WSDOT to prepare an inventory of all prior planning, environmental, permitting and engineering work for the CRC in order to inform the work of a joint Washington and Oregon Legislative Action Committee to be established for the purpose of beginning a new project development process to replace the Interstate Bridge over the Columbia River. Each state legislature identified eight representatives to formally engage in the renewed project development process. In 2019, both Washington (\$35 million, ESHB 1160) and Oregon (\$9 million) dedicated funding to restart work. Bridge replacement planning costs are anticipated to be shared equally between the states and FHWA has granted an extension on repayment of federal funds previously spent on past planning efforts until Sept. 30, 2024.

At the end of the year, the Washington and Oregon Legislative Action Committee Joint Interim Committee on the Interstate 5 Bridge met during three public meetings with the following work program:

- Begin a process toward project development;
- Review and confirm lead roles related to permitting, construction, operation and maintenance of a future Interstate 5 bridge project;
- Seek public comment and present recommendations for process and financing;
- Provide resources to inventory and utilize any prior relevant work to allow for nonduplicative and efficient decision making regarding a new project;
- Examine all potential mass transit options available for a future Interstate 5 bridge project; and
- Use an innovative delivery method such as design-build procurement and other best practices, consistent with work already completed.

Following Washington legislation and funding dedication in both State budgets, Governors Brown and Inslee committed to reopening the bi-state office to reinitiate the IBRP through a Memorandum of Intent. Under the oversight of a Bi-state Legislative Group, ODOT and WSDOT are leading a reinvigorated effort for replacing the river crossing that includes reengaging key stakeholders and the public, reevaluating the purpose and need, reevaluating permits, developing a finance plan, and reevaluating the scope, schedule and budget. The state agencies will be supported by a Program Administrator and a General Engineering Contractor. Partner agencies were invited to provide input in both selection processes. The Program Administrator will lead the program office, directing the multidisciplinary, multiagency team that will be responsible for program development, partner agency involvement and coordination, and community engagement.

An independent facilitator is guiding the bi-state agency partners through a collaborative process for reestablishing the project purpose and need and the governance structure that will guide substantive program development efforts. This work has occurred through a series of four partner agency workshops and several additional meetings with staff that have taken place between March and May of this year:

- Workshop #1 opened up a discussion about partner agency values and expected outcomes from the project and identified shared principles and consensus opportunities. The workshop also included an open and transparent conversation reflecting on lessons learned from the prior process and how the approach to partnership could look different moving forward. Partner agency representatives also discussed what principles would be important to memorialize as part of a future partner agreement and best practice approaches to broad engagement of policymakers, stakeholders, businesses, and communities.
- Workshop #2 continued the conversation around broad engagement and best practices for establishing a governance structure. The workshop focused on confirming the project partnering approach, visualizing an organizational diagram, and the different forms a partner agreement might take. Partner agencies were also invited to engage with and provide feedback on the top candidates for program administrator to help inform final selection.
- Based on the conversations in the first two workshops, Workshop #3 introduced:
 - shared partner expectations and project principles and outcomes for the purpose of guiding bi-state partner agency collaboration moving forward (see Attachment B);
 - a proposed charter establishing the project governance structure, particularly the roles and responsibilities of the Executive Steering Group (ESG) and its relationship to the Bi-State Legislative Group, the Community Advisory Group (CAG), the project office, technical and topical working groups, and the public;
 - a list of issues that the ESG should discuss and address together early in the project development process (see Attachment C); and

- a conceptual process diagram illustrating the project governance structure and the relationships between the groups (see Attachment D).
- Workshop #4 invited additional discussion related to membership of the ESG and CAG and the relationship between those groups and the Bi-State Legislative Group, before approving the draft charter. Partner agencies also discussed developing a partner agreement resolution outlining project principles, values, and expectations for consideration this fall.

The ESG Charter outlines the roles, responsibilities, and operating protocols for how the bi-state agency partners will transition from the informal workshops to formal project guidance as the IBRP moves through planning, design, operational approach, funding, and construction. The charter charges the ESG to engage in a collaborative approach to answering policy questions and participating in interest-based discussions, and commits members to providing feedback from their constituencies, as well as respecting input from the CAG. Further, ESG members will be urged to create feedback loops within their respective organizations to ensure support and buy-in for recommendations developed through the ESG process.

ESG members will be encouraged to strive to make decisions by consensus focused on broader regional and community needs to strengthen the weight of recommendations, recognizing that broad regional support is a critical component for success of the reinitiated IBRP. The ESG will provide advice and recommendations to program office executive leadership and the Bi-state Legislative Committee. Additionally, the ESG will provide regular and timely updates to the bi-state legislative group on progress and recommendations and will strongly encourage direct engagement of bi-state legislative members with the ESG to the extent feasible.

The CAG will provide a forum for community dialogue and provide feedback on community needs, issues, and concerns as it relates to IBRP program development. The ESG will include membership of two voting CAG co-chairs and offer two rotating ex-officio seats to provide the opportunity for all CAG representatives to share perspectives on topics of interest. Additionally, topical and technical working groups of partner agency experts and other stakeholders for the project will be established for the purpose of addressing technical design and other specific issues (see Attachment D).

As far as IBRP next steps, the project team and agency partners will work to identify ESG membership and convene the ESG. In the initial meetings, the ESG will work to develop the project principles and values, identify CAG membership, and explore options for a resolution outlining shared expectations. A draft resolution brought to the ESG would likely be based on the conceptual partner expectations, which identifies key project issues, shared context, and initial principles, outcomes, and expectations for collaboration (see Attachment B). The draft resolution would be presented with the ultimate goal of adoption by partner agencies. Early on, the ESG will discuss and work together to address the project issues listed in Attachment C. Through participation in the ESG, partner agencies will continue to participate in planning and technical work and development of design elements

through environmental review, design, permitting, financing, right of way acquisition, and construction.

Additionally, the IBRP program office is working to determine whether any formal changes need to be made to the original Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) through a supplemental EIS. The target is to make significant progress toward beginning the environmental review process by July 2021. The project office estimates that it will take three to five years to complete the environmental review process and obtain federal approval to move to construction.

ATTACHMENTS

- A. IBRP Oregon Partner Letter to Governors Brown and Inslee (August 2019)
- B. IBRP Draft Conceptual Partner Expectations
- C. IBRP Draft Conceptual Executive Steering Group Issues List
- D. IBRP Draft Process Diagram

- Is legislation required for Council action? ☒ Yes ☐ No
- If yes, is draft legislation attached? ☐ Yes ☒ No