

I-5 Willamette River Bridge

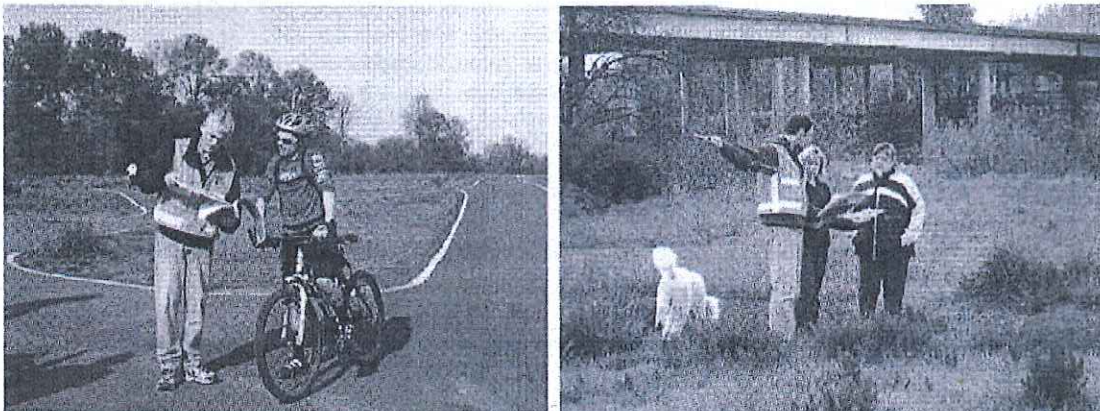
Eugene & Springfield

Summary of Bicycle and Pedestrian Detour Outreach Event April 17-18, 2009

Summary

Two outreach sessions for the construction phases of the I-5 Willamette River Bridge bicycle and pedestrian path detours were held on Friday, April 17 and Saturday, April 18, 2009. Project team members conducted the Friday afternoon outreach event with assistance from two members of the Citizen Advisory Committee. Staff were located in various areas of the Whilamut Natural Area within Eastgate Woodlands and Alton Baker Park. The purposes of the event were to:

- Make path users aware of proposed detours;
- Share, on-site, current information about the location and timing of proposed path closures and detours during bridge construction;
- Provide maps and project information that path users could take with them for later review;
- Interact with different types of path users and elicit questions and/or feedback from users about the proposed path detours and bridge construction in general;
- Provide general information about the Willamette River Bridge project.



The first session of the outreach event was held between the hours of 4 p.m. – 6 p.m. on Friday, April 17, and the second session was held between the hours of 9 a.m. – 11 a.m. on Saturday, April 18, 2009.

Event Staffing



Members of the project team staffing the event included:

Megan Banks, LCOG
Jacob Callister, LCOG
Larry Fox, OBEC
Justin Lanphear, CMGS
Kevin Parrish, Hamilton Construction

Suzanne Roberts, OBDP
Kalin Schmoldt, JLA (Friday)
Paula Taylor, LCOG
Dick Upton, ODOT

The following members of the Community Advisory Group participated in the event on Friday:

Charlotte Behm
David Sonnichsen

Notification and Publicity

The event was advertised using the following methods:

POSTCARD and MAILING LIST (APPENDIX A)

- Mailed to approximately seventy bicycle, pedestrian and various potential park user groups.
- E-mailed to approximately 900 people on the project interested parties list, including the Community Advisory Group and Project Development Team.
- Hand-delivered to area bike shops, Eugene public library, University of Oregon, City of Eugene Public Works (99 East Broadway location) and distributed to the BPAC.
- A detour map and project fact sheet was provided to the event organizer at the Earth Day celebration.

DISPLAY AD (APPENDIX B)

- The Register-Guard on April 14 in Section B, City-Region Section, and April 16 in the City-Region Section (quarter page, 5.75"x10.5").

PRESS RELEASES, NOTICES

- Community Calendar section of The Register-Guard on April 15, 2009.
- Press release issued on April 10, 2009.

ON-LINE

- Notice posted on the project website (www.willamettebridge.org).
- Published in the City of Eugene In-motion on-line newsletter.
- Posted on Central Lane Metropolitan Planning Organization Web site on April 9, 2009.

Event Format

Staff and CAG volunteers were situated at four separate locations—Canoe Canal, Knickerbocker Bridge [photo at right], West D Street Greenway and Alton Baker Park entry kiosks—within the Whilamut Natural Area and Eastgate Woodlands of Alton Baker Park, from which contact could be made with path users (see map, Appendix C). Staff originally planned to have a station at the Alton Baker Park entry kiosks along Leo Harris Parkway but quickly determined that they did not provide sufficient exposure and instead moved to the Knickerbocker Bridge station.



Individuals were contacted either by directly approaching staff and volunteers, or being asked to stop briefly in order to learn about upcoming path detours. To assist in attracting attention, bright orange ODOT cones were placed along the paths at each station and volunteers also wore bright orange vests.

During the Friday late afternoon and early evening event most individuals contacted were bicycle commuters. The Saturday session consisted of mostly recreational users of the paths—runners, cyclists, walkers and dog walkers. Some were on the path as a thoroughfare while others were specifically seeking out information on the project. The time and day of the sessions were structured to engage this variety of users.

The majority of individuals who passed by were approached. Staff used discretion in approaching intensive cyclists or runners, for their own safety and for the benefit of the individual. A conservative estimate range of the number of those personally contacted during the event would likely be between 150-200 groups and individuals. These groups and individuals included several public officials from the area, stopping by to get more information about detours and the bridge in general.

Outreach Materials

The following materials were made available to each individual approached by staff and volunteers (Appendix D):

- A two-sided black and white map summarizing stages one through three of path detours.
- A one page fact sheet summarizing bridge construction and timelines and including the project website address.

Staff and volunteers used 11 x 17 maps with aerial imagery displaying each of the detour routes as they will appear on the temporary detour kiosks to help individuals better visualize the changes. Staff also made users aware of the large temporary kiosks as a source of current information throughout the project. ODOT also provided small marketing items to be handed out. Coffee was available at the Knickerbocker Bridge and West D/Greenway stations Saturday.



Talking points were available for staff to use as needed.

Additionally, those individuals who expressed willingness were also surveyed regarding the frequency of and reasons for their use of the paths, as well as their thoughts about the proposed detours (Appendix E).

Most staff and volunteer interactions with path users lasted only a few minutes or less.

Comments

Feedback from the individuals approached was primarily positive. The majority of individuals expressed gratitude for efforts being taken to keep them aware of the impacts to their use of the paths as well as the ability to get under I-5 on at least one path during construction. Other general feedback included suggestions for the improvement of the paths and specific needs/desires based on a particular user group (Oregon Track Club, Eugene Marathon, residents near North Walnut Road, etc.). Critical feedback was limited, but included expressions of frustration with the cost and duration of construction, discontent with disruptions in daily routines, disappointment with the need to build so many bridges, dissatisfaction with the condition of the Canoe Canal path under I-5, and dissatisfaction with the bridge design (archway in sight line).

Participants' questions were generally able to be answered to their satisfaction using the outreach materials or staff knowledge.

See Appendix F for a summary of comments.

Event Analysis

The event was successful in relation to its purposes. During the event staff and volunteers were able to share current information about the location and timing of proposed path closures and detours during bridge construction with different types of path users. They were also able to provide answers to questions regarding other aspects of the Willamette River Bridge project.

Event staff and volunteers provided the following feedback about event details that may be useful:

- Safety vests that did not say "ODOT" would have been preferred by some volunteers.
- Two-way radios were helpful for staff to communicate among the stations.
- The entry station proved an ineffective location for contacting individuals during sessions. The proposed orientation on Friday before the event didn't work because people were not aware of the entry kiosk location. It also turned out that the orientation was not necessary since most staff and volunteers are heavily involved with the project and proposed detours.
- More staff and volunteers could have been used to staff the Knickerbocker Bridge station than planned. At times, up to four staff were engaged with users.
- Consider more simple and easy to carry takeaway items for those doing intensive exercise or passing by quickly without wanting to stop and chat.
- Surveys were somewhat difficult and awkward to administer to participants only willing to stop for a short time. Because those exercising were typically less interested in stopping for a long period of time (or at all) they are underrepresented in the survey results.
- Fewer papers would have made for smoother interactions and greater organization at the stations.
- Consider carrying or posting signs/sandwich boards that say "Ask me about coming detours" to make path users aware of outreach purpose quickly.
- Consider having food available for path users as a draw.
- Partner and/or coordinate with the City of Eugene bicycle-pedestrian coordinator for rental of space in Alton Baker Park. Consider renting the larger picnic shelters near the paved path if available.
- Consider holding another outreach event in the summer after construction begins.
- Consider holding a forum at Eugene Water and Electric Board's community room as a mechanism to provide more information about construction and the associated detours. Invite event coordinators and have staff available who can provide more specific information about future detours/road closures.
- Consider update the January 2009 Project Fact Sheet and adding more construction-related information.

Action Items

Follow-up on action items identified at the outreach event includes:

- Send digital aerial photo maps for each stage to Springfield Transportation Engineering department.
- Provide copies of detour maps to local bike shops (Paul's Bicycle Way of Life, etc.)
- Provide copies of detour maps to local bike groups (Gears, etc.)
- Provide detour signage on both sides of the temporary kiosks, and improve the temporary kiosks to provide greater weather protection to detour signage.