

# Summary – Meeting #19

## Community Advisory Group I-5 Willamette River Bridge Project

March 11, 2009, 9:45 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

*Bascom & Singer Rooms, Eugene Public Library (100 W. 10th Ave)*

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### ATTENDANCE

#### CAG Members

- Charlotte Behm – Representative, Springfield Neighborhood and member CPC for Whilamut Natural Area
- Eric Gunderson – Former President, American Institute of Architects SWO Chapter
- Rich Hazel – Laurel Hill Valley Citizens Association
- Pat French – Willamalane Parks & Recreation District
- Bob Kline – Chair, Harlow Neighbors
- Vicky Mello – CPC for Whilamut Natural Area
- Chris Ramey – University of Oregon
- David Sonnichsen – Fairmount Neighbors
- Trevor Taylor - Eugene Parks and Open Space Division

#### PDT Members

- Chris Henry – City of Eugene
- Ann Sanders – ODOT, Project Lead

#### Handouts (available at meeting)

- Agenda
- CAG #18 meeting summary (*Draft*)
- CAG #17 meeting summary (*Final*)
- CAG #16/PDT #15 meeting summary (*Final*)
- CAG #15/PDT #14 meeting summary (*Final*)
- CAG #14/PDT #13 meeting summary (*Final*)
- PDT #16 meeting summary (*Final*)

### DESIGN WORKSHOP SHOWCASE

*Prior to the meeting, committee members were invited to the Bascom Room to view drawings and conceptual work from the February design workshops. The group reconvened for their normal meeting in the Singer Room at 10:30am.*

#### Resource Team

- Megan Banks – Public Involvement, LCOG
- Douglas Beauchamp – Lane Arts Council
- Jamie Damon – Public Involvement Manager, JLA
- John Ferguson – Asst. Project Manager, T.Y. Lin
- Kevin Parrish – Hamilton
- Kalin Schmoltdt – Public Involvement Coordinator, JLA
- Dick Upton – ODOT Project Manager, Bridge Delivery Unit

#### Other Attendees

- Brian Baker – OBDP
- Charles Biggs – CPC for Whilamut Natural Area (CAG Alternate)
- Jacob Callister – LCOG
- Suzanne Roberts – OBDP
- John Rose – Local Artist
- Esther Stutzman – Kalapuya

## **WELCOME AND AGENDA REVIEW**

Jamie Damon led a round of introductions. Pat French will resume her role on the CAG.

**PUBLIC COMMENTS** – There were no comments.

## **COMMITTEE BUSINESS**

**CAG #18 Summary** – The committee approved the summary with no changes.

**Statement from PDT Representative** – Charlotte Behm noted that she has served as the CAG representative on the PDT for two years and that she would like to be replaced. Because the current alternate (Dave Carvo) has been unable to attend a number of the PDT meetings Charlotte suggested that she be replaced by David Sonnichsen. She cited David's knowledge of the park, representation of the neighborhood, previous involvement with the creation of the temporary bridge, and history of attending PDT meetings as an observer. David said that he was willing to accept the position and that he would try to increase awareness by the PDT of the CAG discussions. David said that CAG members would be encouraged to contact him with material or concerns that the PDT should be aware of.

All members of the CAG present agreed that David should assume the role of representative to the PDT. Charlotte offered to assume the role of alternate in order to provide continuity.

## **PROJECT UPDATE**

**Schedule & Budget** – Dick Upton said that the project was still within budget and that construction is quickly approaching. Permits are expected in April. Suzanne Roberts and Dick have been discussing public information needs prior to construction.

**Community Presentations** – Dick said that he had recently spoken to the CPC, Fairmount Neighbors, and the Laurel Hill Valley (LHV) Neighborhood Association among others. Feedback has been generally positive with great interest in the aesthetic elements. Currently there are about 26 other potential speaking opportunities. Dick will meet with LHV in early April to provide technical information on sound walls. This will be followed by a poll of the neighbors within the "sound shadow" to determine whether a sound wall is desired. Only those residents within the sound shadow (determined through technical analysis) will be able to vote. This process will be repeated for the West Centennial Neighborhood.

Bob Kline asked when contractor equipment would start moving onto the site. Kevin Parrish said that May 4 is the target date.

**Upcoming Work** – John Ferguson noted the quick pace of the design work and how the use of separate early work packages is allowing work to begin sooner. The first work package will include elements such as the temporary bridges, access roads, temporary paths and detours, footing sizes for the main spans, and the sign bridge. Finishing the items in the early work package will allow work to continue above the water in the winter months. The goal is to submit the early work package by March 26. The CAG will need to think about how the elements produced at the design workshop are translated to match the construction schedule. He noted that there may be ways to implement aesthetic elements on the sign bridge through precast panels after the structure is in place.

Vicky Mello asked for more details on the access roads. John explained that the roads would facilitate contractor access to the site and were necessary to support the construction equipment. Jamie offered to get a copy of the proposed access road map to Vicky. Dick assured her that the item in the work package doesn't include new roads that the CAG isn't already aware of.

**Public Involvement** – Megan Banks explained that the goal for the coming months will be to distribute information about the detours and upcoming construction. Temporary kiosks in the park will provide some of this information and there will also be media outreach concerning the outcome of the recent design workshops. Outreach will continue to local organizations and the many bike and pedestrian groups affected by the detours.

## **DESIGN WORKSHOPS**

**Overview** – Megan introduced Randy Nishimura who led the February workshops. Randy explained that charettes are intended to harness productive energy over a specific period of time and to create ideas to carry forward. Unlike some charettes, these workshops were intended to produce actionable items. The process was organized around a hand-picked group of around 60 artists, architects, landscape architects, and technical staff. The meetings were held on Feb. 21 and 28. The setup allowed each group to observe each others work. Several CAG members were present to help guide the participants, as well as cultural resources like David Lewis (Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde), Esther Stutzman (Kalapuya), and Lisa Ponder (creator of the Talking Stones).

Facilitators at each table tried to make sure that all voices were heard and all ideas were explored. The work during the first Saturday was intended to not limit the creative process. At the end of the first day, the group reviewed the results at the end of the first Sat and marked favorite ideas to see whether there was consensus about moving forward with certain concepts. The work was then summarized by table and theme in preparation for the second Saturday.

The second Saturday included presentations on design ideas and imagery as well as a presentation from the artists in the group. The small groups were re-mixed in order to evoke new creative energy. The second day was also more focused and pragmatic than the first and included feedback from the technical team members.

**Presentation** – Eric Gunderson described the challenge of distilling creative energy into actionable ideas. He describe the weekend as exciting and productive. The collaborative approach with diverse groups produced a surprising depth of outcomes. With the goal of increasing the role of design and art in the project, the workshop process attempted to help answer three questions: 1) *What is the theme or big idea that unifies the whole place?* 2) *What items can be implemented as separate works of art?* 3) *Which design elements can be incorporated by the design team during the creation of the project?* While the first week focused on larger ideas and themes, the second week narrowed the ideas into more developed concepts:

- **The Whole Family** – This concept looks at the whole of the project and the experience of the entire area. Prominent ideas included: respect for the bridge as a beautiful structure by itself; the riparian edges along the river; the sound wall experience; the sign bridge; the railroad fence; the canoe canal; the possibility for an interpretive center; and the concept of a camas meadow. The group also proposed the use of lighting to accentuate the arches at night.

- **One Minute Movie** – This concept considered the process of traveling from one end of the site to the other as experienced by cars on I-5. Several ideas focused on artistic treatments for the railings, fence, and guardrails. Part of the “movie” emphasized the passage from the valley to the foothills. Part of this passage could be emphasized by making the soundwalls more geological and natural on the foothills side. Space in the median between the bridges could be used for sculpture. Landscaping was explored as a way to emphasize the transition through the planting evergreens by the soundwalls or cottonwoods along the freeway to create a gateway effect. The group also suggested using part of the park as a camas meadow.
- **Camassage (Camas Passage)** – A group explored the camas flower as an analogy for the place; the aerial of the site even looks roughly like a camas flower. The group explored the idea of using plant materials to screen the industrial area, while reinforcing the riparian edges and the connection to the valley. There was an idea to combine an art-nouveau camas sculpture with the sign bridge or to place a similar structure in the space between the bridges. While schedule may be a constraint in the sign bridge design, it was suggested that a normal sign bridge could be built now and then reused elsewhere and replaced by a new artistic version at some point in the future.
- **The Nature of Walls** – The group envisioned the walls next to the LHV neighborhood as being stone-like and including plantings and planting niches. Organic imagery could be included on the walls through the use of form-liners or other media. The walls could weave or overlap to appear more natural and allow for plantings between the walls if practical. The group envisioned a “10 second movie” that could describe the step-by-step lifecycle of a camas bulb. The group also suggested methods for making the walls by pre-casting reversible panels that would help alleviate visual repetition but still use standard form methods.
- **Mill Race Place** – Treatment of the mill race area was challenging because of the number of interacting elements and difficulty with visualizing the site. Eric suggested that a 3D model could help improve understanding of the area. The group noted that access and security are major issues. The limited access creates a “troll under the bridge” sensation that could be alleviated through nearby parking or continuing the bike path along the river edge.
- **Steps** – This concept looks at the theme of footsteps on a large scale and in the treatment of paths and hardscapes. The group considered incorporating patches of stone design elements or plant materials into the landscape. One artist came up with the idea of incorporating specific themes (such as water, wildlife and history,) directly into the paths.

Eric highlighted the many common interwoven themes that emerged during the workshops:

- **More with less** – The bridge as an elegant, crisp structure that should not be cluttered and should be respected. The surrounding elements should be part of the whole story as should the other structures required by the project.
- **Weaving Space** – Undulation was a common theme. Many of the concept drawings used a sinuous pattern in describing the ramps, soundwalls and gateway elements.

- **Weaving History** – Incorporation of elements at different scales that reveal layers of history, both human and natural.
- **Weaving Experience** – Creating sequences of events or carrying a theme (such as camas) throughout the project that unifies the place.
- **Organic & Inorganic** – Combining built elements with organic elements. Plants could be combined with hardscapes or organic images could be used on soundwalls.
- **Transitions** – *Spatial*: the bridge could emerge from a wall of trees; the landscape could describe the arrival at the river. *Temporal*: the 10 second movie. *Vertical*: the experiences at different levels (park, Franklin, I-5) could provide unique opportunities and richness.
- **A Light Touch** – The theme of footsteps at a large and small scale. Could parts of the old bridge be reused? Could the pieces tell stories and serve as a modern version of the Talking Stones? Lighting could be used to gently mark the bridge.

Eric concluded: *We're crossing a place but also a time. / We have the opportunity to arrive in a new place. / What would we hope to bring with us? / / A set of solutions woven together will carry them safely.*

Randy complimented the output from the two days of work. Dick noted the uniqueness of the workshop approach to finding ways to build creative ideas into the structure instead of just pasting things onto the side. Dick complimented the ideas and expressed confidence in the process.

Bob said he had attended each meeting and that he thought the outcome was a good basis for potential artist RFPs. Bob asked about the feasibility of placing objects between the bridge spans. Eric said that ideas for kinetic structures were not carried forward out of safety concerns. JF Alberson suggested that the idea evolved so as to let the cars add the element of movement and let the bridge be lovely on its own. Bob noted that the undulating fence treatments could contribute to the bridge experience. Randy said that the fence illustrations were intended primarily as placeholders for other ideas. John said that placing objects between the bridges is not precluded but more coordination is needed in order to entertain the idea as some openness is required for maintenance activities.

Esther Stutzman asked about the process for determining whether any of the elements could prove distracting to drivers. John acknowledged the need to address potential safety issues for whoever can see the design elements.

Jamie Damon asked about the reaction from the project team on the previous Friday. Eric said that there was more feedback about adding or amplifying ideas than taking them off the table. David Lewis had suggested including *direction* as a theme because it was a significant concept for the Kalapuya people. There was discussion of whether it was feasible to use the parks during which the idea of reusing the pillars from the temporary bridge was eliminated because of the likelihood that they would not be well supported by the ground. The camas meadow idea raised community involvement possibilities as well as questions about soil suitability. Jiri seemed to appreciate the idea of lighting the arches. Don Kahle said that Jiri didn't give the impression that he heard anything he didn't like, but he seemed to indicate that the group had reached similar conclusions to his own.

## **DESIGN DIRECTION FROM THE CAG**

David Sonnichsen expressed concern about how travelers would see the south end of the underside of the bridge as the area between the river and railroad is sort of a wasteland. He encouraged that

the new design should look at elements to create a more pleasant experience, perhaps through stone and landscaping. Don Kahle acknowledged the three unique experiences for commuters on I-5, users of the paths and Franklin, and the visitor oriented views from the park. He said that the design should touch all three experiences.

Trevor Taylor noted that the CAG had discussed the three different user experiences in the past as well as the idea of *organic* design. He said that he enjoyed the theme of transition through arriving and departing through the soundwalls and the sign bridge. Trevor noted that the theme of sustainability was not as prominent as previously discussed. While reuse of materials is part of sustainability, it would be nice to see more deliberate focus through elements such as permanent, low-maintenance materials or self-sustaining art. He noted that the use of lighting does require energy and raises the question of who is responsible for it. He acknowledged the value of the lighting aesthetic as well as concerns about how lighting could affect birds. Bike paths also present a challenge as they serve as the main route for the majority of people along the river.

Charlotte Behm said that she liked the use of the fences over the railroad as a gateway feature and that she understood Jiri's desire to preserve simplicity on the bridges and not make things busy. She noted that many parts of the project deal with water and that she would like to see the design further incorporate a water-as-passage theme. Charlotte noted some of Esther's historical work pertaining to the Kalapuya use of canoes and suggested that related elements of travel and life could be integrated into the project. Charlotte asked Esther for her thoughts. Esther said that she thought there were some fantastic elements being considered that are both pleasing and respectful. She said liked the idea of incorporating the canoe theme. Charlotte encouraged Esther to remain involved.

Chris Ramey noted that his group had talked about ways to capture and treat water runoff and let it flow back into the environment in such a way that people would be inclined to question and learn about the process. Chris suggested minimizing elements that would distract from the bridge and the big picture. He encouraged telling a clear story that appeals to the three part audience.

Megan Banks noted that Jiri was excited about the potential use of landscaping leading to an open and relatively silent bridge.

David Sonnichsen noted that part of the experience of crossing the bridge involves seeing the river. He questioned whether the width of the bridge and rails could hinder the ability of motorists to see the water. Dick said that the open rail was still being considered and that it might be possible to shift the roadway alignment (within guidelines) in order to facilitate a better view.

Charlotte Behm observed that the river itself is not silent at the location of the bridge. Rich noted previous discussions of how to balance the desire for something memorable with something that fits the area. He suggested that the use of the deck-arch could facilitate a signature-*crossing* through the use of "architectural silence" as opposed to calling attention to a signature-*bridge*.

Charlotte Behm noted that she often appreciates being in the park at night and was concerned about bridge lighting shifting the focus from the park to the bridge. Chris suggested that the bridge need not be illuminated at all times. For example, the lighting could be set to change with the phases of the moon. JF and Don noted that the lighting in question would not be about illuminating the bridge so much as showing a mild suggestion of the curves. Kevin explained that the lighting would

fade as it approaches the water. He suggested visiting the bridge at Gold Beach to see an example. Rich Hazel requested a better picture of the Gold Beach bridge.

Pat French complimented the ideas. She liked the emphasis on camas and basalt, the wavy and curvy elements, the use of interpretive information and converting the adjacent parking area into a trailhead. Pat suggested that a 5-10 acre field of non-native pasture grasses to the north of the Eastgate Woodlands could be used as another area to showcase camas and native plants and be viewable by northbound I-5 travelers. The group was agreeable to the idea. Charlotte reiterated her support for a parking area on the south shore, noting that such an area would help foster a sense of destination.

Rich Hazel said that he liked the concept of a unified whole through a signature crossing. He encouraged creating a sense of place within the industrial area to the south and supported adding parking and additional access to the surrounding neighborhood.

Vicky Mello noted that it would be nice to facilitate better connections to the bike path from Springfield. She liked the workshop ideas, particularly the water elements and the idea of showing the water returning to the river. The river itself used to be a braided river and it could be appropriate to showcase some part of that historical ecological system in the park. She agreed that less is best and the human footprint (including signage) should be minimized while encouraging wildlife.

Douglas Beauchamp thanked the AIA for including the artists throughout the process. Douglas acknowledged the presence of John Rose, the glass artist who performed much of the glass work in the library and at the LTD station. Douglas noted that the artists met in advance of the workshop to discuss how to keep arts ideas alive during the process. The group will meet again to discuss their afterthoughts but they have otherwise completed their task to date. From this point, artist involvement could include a role on an interdisciplinary design team or artists could help designate which zones are the best for incorporation of art within the project. Three basic concepts embody the challenges faced by the artists: place making; storytelling (in many ways inspired by Esther); and way-marking (noting where people are going and that they have crossed through a place and time). Trevor asked about the next decision steps. He noted that there are still a number of opportunities that have not been explored beneath the bridge pertaining to the footings, slopes and concrete infrastructure. Douglas said that the artists are engaged and fascinated, though there are currently no firm next steps for their involvement.

Jamie Damon noted that the group was largely expressing support for the concepts developed during the workshops, but would like more information on the lighting, ways to incorporate water, and elements that reflect sustainability.

Charlotte Behm asked whether the group was ready to agree that the bridge itself should be the focus of attention at the crossing and that additional decoration was not necessary except perhaps the railing treatments. Trevor said that he liked the description of a signature *crossing*, but he suggested that the group not limit itself to no above deck features at this time. Chris suggested that any limitation should occur for the area over the arched spans and that the other areas away from the arches could benefit from extra design elements. He suggested that a master plan is needed that tells the story through the tools available, and that plan could include a variety of design features. While the committee was generally supportive of Charlotte's proposition, there was not a firm commitment at this time.

## **NEXT STEPS**

Jamie noted that the PDT would meet on Friday and that April 15 or 21 was under consideration for the next CAG meeting. Until that meeting, the team will be matching design elements with the work packages to determine when decisions are needed. The continuing role of artists and architects in advancing the conversation will also be addressed. There will be further development of the coming process as well as the upcoming PI tasks.

Charlotte suggested that the team maintain contact and dialogue with the committee and the community so as to avoid getting onto a wrong path. She suggested keeping the group in the loop regarding relevant decisions through email or other means so there is no need to backpedal. Jamie noted that there is a plan to roll out the results of the design workshops to the media and that the group would be informed before that outreach begins.