

Summary – Meeting #1

Community Advisory Group – I-5 Willamette River Bridge Project

Jan. 8, 2007, 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

Bascom Room, Eugene Public Library (100 West 10th Ave.)

ATTENDANCE

CAG Members

- David Sonnichsen – Chair, CPC for Whilamut Natural Area
- Pat French – Planner and CPC Representative, Willamalane Park & Recreation District
- Trevor Taylor – Natural Resources Supervisor, Eugene Parks and Open Space Division
- Rich Hazel – Co-Chair, Laurel Hill Valley Citizens Association
- John Barofsky – Co-Chair, Fairmount Neighbors
- Bob Kline – Chair, Harlow Neighbors
- Dave Carvo – Vice Chair, Glenwood Neighborhood Group
- Charlotte Behm – Representative, Springfield Neighborhood (and member, CPC for Whilamut Natural Area)
- Renée L. Benoit – Membership Director, Springfield Chamber of Commerce
- David Hauser – President, Eugene Area Chamber of Commerce
- Chris Ramey – Director and Architect, University Planning Office, University of Oregon

Resource Team

- Ann Sanders – ODOT Project Leader/Area Representative for Lane County, ODOT Region 2
- Tim Dodson – ODOT Project Liaison/CPM, ODOT Bridge Delivery Unit
- Jason Neil – Integration Program Manager, Oregon Bridge Delivery Partners
- Lou Krug – Project Manager, Oregon Bridge Delivery Partners
- James Gregory – Environmental Task Leader, Oregon Bridge Delivery Partners
- Randa Gahin – Public Involvement Coordinator, Jeanne Lawson Associates
- Kalin Schmoldt – Public Involvement Assistant, Jeanne Lawson Associates

Other Attendees

- Charles Biggs – CPC for Whilamut Natural Area (alternate for David Sonnichsen)

HANDOUTS

- Agenda
- Committee Protocols (discussion draft)
- Contact List
- Decision-Making Structure
- Project Schedule and Process Steps
- Purpose and Need Statement – Guidance
- Purpose and Need Statement – Draft 1/8/07
- Design and Environmental Issues
- Aerial Photo

WELCOME

Tim Dodson welcomed the group. He described the Willamette River Bridge project as the capstone of the OTIA III program and possibly the last bridge to be finished in the program. The completion deadline is set for December 12, 2012. Tim explained that the OTIA III program was established to replace and repair deficient bridges throughout Oregon. He emphasized the importance of staying on the tight project schedule and said that the project's success would be dependent on sensitivity to adjacent parks and communities. He explained that this body, the Community Advisory Group, will develop recommendations for the Project Development Team (PDT) based on the needs and interests of the community. He noted that there will also be public open houses to reach the larger community.

Tim introduced himself and said he was part of the Oregon Bridge Delivery Program. He said he was overseeing the OBDP (Oregon Bridge Delivery Partners) team that has pulled together bridge experts from around the nation.

Tim introduced project manager Lou Krug. Lou further elaborated on the OTIA III program and described the unique nature of the Willamette River Bridge project. OTIA stands for the Oregon Transportation Investment Act. The OTIA III program will repair or replace hundreds of bridges around the state. He noted that the Willamette River Bridge is one of the longest bridges in the OTIA III program, situated in an urban setting close to parks, and is of great community interest. He said that while many of the bridges in the program are using a categorical exclusion from NEPA, this project is going through an Environmental Assessment because of the importance of the bridge and the interest in creating a bridge that is compatible with the surrounding area.

PURPOSE OF MEETING AND COMMITTEE INTRODUCTIONS

Randa introduced herself and led a round of introductions for group members. Each member stated their name, position, and interest in the project.

- *Randa Gabin*, Jeanne Lawson Associates: Facilitating as productive a public process as possible.
- *Jason Neil*, OBDP: This bridge is a unique part of the [OTIA III] program, one of two signature bridges.
- *John Barofsky*, Fairmount Neighbors: Interested in how the project affects the Fairmount neighborhood adjacent to the bridge.
- *Chris Ramey*, University of Oregon Planning Office: Similar interests to John, he noted that the bridge represents many interests of community and the university.
- *Rene Benoit*, Springfield Chamber of Commerce: The bridge is located in Springfield.
- *Dave Carvo*, Glenwood Neighborhood: Serves on the advisory committee for the redevelopment of Glenwood, wants to include the neighborhood on relevant issues.
- *Bob Kline*, Harlow Neighborhood: Serves on the Futures Committee building a convention center in Glenwood. Concerned about aesthetics and the environment.
- *Trevor Taylor*, Eugene Parks and Open Space Division: The Whilamut Natural area serves as a gateway to Eugene. Interested in issues with recreational uses.

- *Charlotte Behm*, Springfield Neighborhood/Whilamut Natural Area: Lives next to Whilamut Natural area and serves on the citizen planning committee. She worked on the current bridge and complimented ODOT for their treatment of environmental issues relating to the park.
- *Pat French*, Willamalane Park and Recreation District: Owns the Eastgate Woodlands on the east side of Interstate 5.
- *Ann Sanders*, ODOT Region 2: ODOT Project Leader and Area Representative.
- *David Sonnichsen*, Whilamut Natural Area: Has concerns regarding the environment and aesthetics. He would like a bridge with no pillars in the river.
- *David Hauser*, Eugene Chamber of Commerce: The bridge is a community development issue.
- *Rich Hazel*, Laurel Hill Valley Citizens Association: Adjacent to the bridge, concerns with aesthetics and noise
- *Tim Dodson*, ODOT Bridge Delivery Unit: Has oversight of work by the project team.
- *James Gregory*, OBDP: Responsible for preparation of the Environmental Assessment.

Randa noted that she would be guiding the meeting and encouraged the group to let her know if they felt issues needed further discussion. Randa then reviewed the purpose of the meeting, as listed on the agenda: introducing the project; formalizing committee roles, responsibilities and protocols; discussing the Purpose and Need Statement; identifying issues of concern; and selecting a representative to serve on the PDT. Randa noted that the representative would serve as a bridge between the CAG and the PDT.

PROJECT OVERVIEW

Project background - Lou briefly gave some project history. He described how many of the bridges in the interstate system were built in the 1950s with an anticipated 50 year lifespan. Consequently, the entire country is dealing with age related problems. He noted that current design guidelines are for 75 years. Lou emphasized that the Willamette River Bridge is unique and deserves unique treatment. He noted that because of the bridge's unique features, there will be an in-depth Environmental Assessment as part of the NEPA process. He noted that the project will need to meet requirements by the Environmental Protection Agency, the Federal Highway Administration, the Clean Water Act, and the Endangered Species Act. A 404 Permit for placing fill within a waterway will also be required. The study will be providing documentation to satisfy these requirements.

Lou said that there will be an in-depth alternatives analysis using community input to pick the best alternative to move forward with. The Environmental Assessment could yield a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) or there could be impacts that would require an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS.)

Lou directed attention to the project schedule. The schedule is for eighteen months to a finished document, with the intent to publish the draft EA in about one year. He explained that it was critical to get to a final recommendation on the bridge type within six months or so. Lou said that the timing for the CAG meetings was somewhat flexible, though there is much work for the group to help with. He explained the role of the Project Development Team (PDT) as the decision making group and drew attention to the planned public meetings and milestones for the environmental

assessment process. Randa added that the chart was a work in process, though the milestones were more or less fixed.

Environmental process - Lou explained the decision making structure chart, noting that it is the role of the CAG to provide input to the PDT. The PDT is the decision making body for ODOT. He explained that while FHWA has overall control, it generally works closely with ODOT. Ultimately, FHWA will sign off on the design and provide funding. He added that local requirements will need to be satisfied as well, and said that the project will need to fit the land-use requirements for Eugene, Springfield, and Lane County.

NEED FOR THE PROJECT

Lou said that the purpose of the project was generally to improve safety [editor's note: the purpose is also to maintain connectivity and mobility]. He explained how the bridge is in poor condition and how a temporary detour bridge was necessary to maintain load capacity. He said that repairing the existing bridge was not deemed a feasible option, and said that the detour bridge was intended only as an emergency replacement. Lou explained that the Purpose and Need statement is a requirement of NEPA and FHWA to explain to the public why the project is needed as well as to set the stage for developing evaluation criteria and project Goals and Objectives. He noted that the evaluation criteria can be wide ranging, and it would be the work of the CAG to identify issues and translate them into Goals and Objectives that will be used to compare alternatives.

Guidance document - Randa drew attention to the sheet describing what a Purpose and Need statement is. She explained that the purpose is the "what" of the proposal, and is not supposed to contain a solution. The "need" supports the purpose. She said that the Purpose and Need Statement will be crafted by a technical team, while the CAG will help with the Goals and Objectives which are how the Purpose and Need will be met.

Draft Purpose and Need Statement and project parameters/constraints - James handed out a list of design parameters and environmental considerations/requirements. He explained that the Goals and Objectives go beyond the utilitarian Purpose and Need into how evaluation happens. James asked the group to consider various design and environmental issues and how they can be articulated into defined goals and objectives. He noted that the desire to keep piers out of the water would be a structural requirement. James also noted that FHWA and ODOT will not approve alternatives until land use requirements are met. He asked the group to consider measurable criteria by which to evaluate options.

Randa explained that the Goals and Objectives will largely come out of today's discussion. She drew attention to the draft Purpose and Need Statement and noted that **the group should email her any comments by Monday the 15th**. Randa said she would email out the document.

A question was asked about what will happen to the temporary bridge. Lou Krug said it would be removed. He noted that it will be a challenge to keep traffic flowing while shifting from one bridge to another.

Randa explained that an EA would normally consider different build alternatives and alignments, but because the bridge alignment is essentially set, the group will be primarily looking at bridge type

alternatives. A no-build option will need to be addressed as part of the process, which could mean leaving the temporary bridge in place. The no-build option is not yet exactly defined. However, a no-build option would not mean doing nothing.

Jason Neil noted that any repairs to the decommissioned bridge would probably be short-lived. He added that because time and space are limited, the demolition process for the old bridge and detour bridge would require some creative thinking. Lou noted that it will be important to look at construction impacts as well.

A committee member asked for clarification on the meaning of the NBI# in the table on page 3 of the draft Purpose and Need statement. Jason explained that the NBI# is just a label for the bridge and that the page also shows numbers rating various aspects of the bridge against national standards (NBI stands for National Bridge Inventory). Lou said that the page describes specific deficiencies (the highlighted rows) and documents why it is not practical to repair the bridge. He also invited the group to let the team know about any questions they might have so that experts can come in and answer technical questions. Randa encouraged group members to ask for clarification on any technical items or jargon throughout this process.

Lou added that there has been a lot of work on environmental baseline studies, water quality, cultural resources, and hydraulics. He said that the data is available to anyone who wants to see it.

COMMITTEE PROTOCOLS

Randa asked that group members let her know if their contact information needs to be modified. She also called on each member in the group to establish an alternate. **Randa asked that the group send contact information for alternates sometime in the next week.** Communication with the committee will take place primarily by email - the group indicated that this was acceptable. Randa noted that discussing protocols early helps to optimize the use of committee time.

Committee roles/responsibilities – Randa described the members of the CAG as representatives of the interests of their respective groups. She asked them to consult with their organizations, and other related organizations, share information with them, and bring their comments/input back to the group. Randa added that meeting information and materials will normally be sent out at least a week in advance.

Develop protocols – Randa explained that the meeting protocols belong to the group, and the draft handed out is for the group to modify as needed. She led the group in a discussion of the draft protocols.

Meeting Attendance and Structure: Regarding how to handle public comments, the group agreed to provide 5 minute slots at the beginning and end of the meeting (total of 10 minutes per meeting) to accommodate attendees arriving at different times during the meeting. The time limit per person will be determined by the facilitator. Members of the public will be encouraged to submit comments in writing. Lou informed the CAG that the project team is available to attend a neighborhood meeting and speak, if it would be helpful to facilitate communicating with and receiving comments from the public.

Some members expressed interest in having public notice posted for the meetings. Randa will check into placing notices in the local newspapers and on City public meeting calendars.

Interactions During Meetings: Randa emphasized the importance of raising issues early on in the process and allowing the group to consider them.

Communication Between Meetings: Randa noted that the protocol stating that members are to discuss issues outside the group in ways that “support the group process” is very important.

Joe Harwood will be the official contact for the media. CAG members should direct any media inquiries to him. Some concern was expressed regarding whether Joe would be able to adequately represent the group to the media if he has not attended the meetings. Jason explained that Joe would come to the group if he had questions. Lou added that it is the project team’s job to keep Joe apprised of what is going on. In addition, Ann Sanders works directly with Joe and will make sure he is kept informed if he is unable to attend a meeting. Randa also encouraged the CAG to keep the team informed of any media stories they notice about the project.

The group discussed whether it would be appropriate to CC the entire group on email discussions of project issues. After some debate weighing the risk of flooding people’s inboxes vs. the value of being able to hear others’ opinions, the group decided that Randa would receive emails and compile them into a digest format for distribution in a timely fashion. However, group members are encouraged to communicate with one another directly on issues that they feel would be important to specific members.

Membership and Voting: Randa noted that it helps to include the same representative throughout the process, if possible. Many of the CAG members are elected or term-limited; these types of changes are unavoidable. Members should just keep in mind that the project team would like to keep membership as consistent as possible, including alternates. It is preferred to have alternates pre-designated, but the group agreed it would be OK to have other alternates attend, as long as they are thoroughly prepared to serve. Several members indicated they would not be able to identify a single alternate to attend every time, and much would depend on meeting and member schedules. Randa asked the group to send her as specific information on alternates as possible so as to be able to distribute meeting materials and information. Alternates will be able to vote, with no more than one vote per entity.

A CAG member asked whether the group had a process for adding more members to the CAG. Randa asked that any additions be identified as soon as possible, so that they can participate in the full process rather than coming in mid-way. The additional member would be subject to approval of the CAG.

A suggestion was made to include a tourism representative (possibly the Convention Visitors Association Lane County Oregon). Another member noted that the Chambers of Commerce seemed to represent those interests on the committee. Another suggestion was made to add a bicyclist group. Members commented that the parks have strongly represented the interests of recreation and cyclists. In addition, the neighborhood associations have advocated for many of these interests. Bob Kline noted that he was a member of the Convention and Visitors Association and a cyclist who lives on the bike path. Randa emphasized that advocacy groups will be included in the process, if not on the CAG specifically. Lou noted that much of the

involvement for specific design details (such as bike paths) will come into play in about one year, and those groups would be consulted at that point. Another member stated that he was generally pleased with the makeup of the group, but wanted to make sure that environmental advocacy groups were included in the process. Randa said that various groups were being kept informed, and added that 1000 Friends had declined a committee position. A CAG member recommended Lane Independent Living Alliance, (LILA) a disability group, as an interest group to be included. Randa will make sure this group is on the mailing list. Randa encouraged CAG members to invite representatives of these groups to attend the meetings, if they thought the topics discussed would be of interest to them.

Decision Making: Randa emphasized that “consensus” does not mean complete agreement by the entire group, but rather the point at which all members can support a specific decision as the most viable for the group as a whole. She said that sometimes an informal five-finger straw poll may be used to gauge interest, while other times a vote may be necessary for moving forward. The group then discussed voting logistics. Several members stated that it is important to note dissenting opinions even with a majority vote. Randa confirmed that minority opinions will be conveyed to the PDT. The group discussed whether to use a simple majority or 60%. The group opted to use a simple majority, with two members favoring 60%. Lou assured the group that recommendations from the CAG will have associated explanations.

Randa noted that group decisions will be "frozen" to encourage group productivity and eliminate redundant discussion. Decisions can only be revisited if the group decides as a whole to do so, based on new information presented, or other circumstances.

Selection of Liaison/PDT representative - Randa noted that the representative to the PDT will be a vote casting member and will also be a communicator between the two groups. Most of the PDT meetings will be held locally, but some could be in Salem. They are likely to all be daytime meetings. Dave Carvo expressed interest. A member noted that Charlotte and David Sonnichsen have done similar work before. David Sonnichsen nominated Charlotte because of her experience and knowledge as an engineer. Randa offered that the responsibility could be shared between two or three people. Charlotte offered to be the primary with Dave Carvo as a backup. The group accepted the designations by consensus.

ISSUES DISCUSSION

Review public feedback so far - Randa noted that the project began with interviews of various stakeholders during February of last year. The interviews and email comments were condensed down into a list of primary issues noted on the display boards. Randa noted that the list was not comprehensive and invited the group to add to or make changes to the issues. The final list will inform the goals and objectives.

1. Park Impacts – Several members recommended that the language go beyond just minimizing impacts to include actual enhancement of the park environment. A bullet was added:

- *Seek opportunities to enhance the park environment and further park plan goals.*

2. River Impacts – A proposal was made to change the language regarding the piers to include the possibility of eliminating the piers. The bullet was changed to:

- *Eliminate or minimize the number of piers in the river.*

The group discussed the meaning intended in the bullet referencing removal of old pilings in the river. Randa said that it referred to the old millrace structure which had been identified as a hazard by several groups. Ann Sanders noted that she heard two different comments at the open house – referring both to removing the old pilings from the temporary bridge and old bridge, as well as the old millrace structure (specifically the re-bar that is protruding into the boating channel).

Trevor Taylor noted that the U of O is pumping water into the millrace for their power plant and asked Chris Ramey whether there were any plans to change the system. Chris said that the millrace is used as a heat sink and could be replaced by cooling towers. He posed the question of whether the community would want to maintain the millrace when the university no longer needs it.

The question was raised whether removing the millrace structure should be associated with this project or treated separately, and whether it would lead to a cost increase. Jason Neil noted that removing the structure could be considered habitat enhancement and could serve as mitigation. Another member pointed out that if it is not included in this project, it is unlikely to ever get funding.

The bullet regarding old pilings was changed to two bullets:

- Remove the old pilings *from the temporary and old bridges* in the river.
- *Remove the old millrace structure in the river.*

A CAG member suggested a new issue regarding changes to river hydrology and the problems that could create. A bullet was added:

- *Minimize impacts of altering river hydrology (temporary and permanent).*

3. Neighborhoods/Noise – No comments.

4. Bridge Design – A member noted that there were no points dealing with safety or capacity. Tim Dodson said that those factors would be included in the safety goals and objectives and included on a separate list that would also inform the goals and objectives. He noted that FHWA will be looking for a 75-year life span and three lanes in each direction with the potential for expanding to four. The member also mentioned the importance of making the bridge easy to replace at the end of its lifespan.

Exercise to identify/prioritize issues – Each member was given 7 dots. Randa instructed the group to place dots next to the key issues that were important to them. Members could each place no more than two dots on any one issue, and could not barter their dots with other members. The total votes and text edits to the issues list are compiled in a separate document from this summary.

Randa assured the group that they will have more opportunity to discuss the issues as they worked through the process of developing the Goals and Objectives and evaluation criteria.

A member asked whether additional on/off ramps were being considered in any of the bridge designs. Tim stated that on/off ramps would not be included in bridge design. Ann clarified that the bridge design would not preclude future ramps.

5. Construction Impacts – No comments.

NEXT STEPS

The PDT will meet this Friday. Tim noted that the PDT meetings were not open to the public.

The next CAG meeting is scheduled for Wed., Jan. 31 from 10 am to 1 pm. The location has not been determined. The team plans to present a set of bridge type options for the CAG's review and consideration at that meeting.

ACTION ITEMS

- Randa will email the Draft Purpose and Need Statement to the group.
- CAG members should respond to Randa with comments on the Draft Purpose and Need Statement by the end of the day, Monday, Jan. 15.
- CAG members should send Randa names and contact information for their alternates.
- Randa will send out revised Committee Protocols, incorporating the changes made by the group.
- Randa will look into advertising the CAG meetings to the public.
- The team will present CAG input on the issues to the PDT.
- The team will develop draft Goals and Objectives based on the issues discussion and input from the PDT.