

MEETING: Columbia River Crossing (CRC) Project Sponsors Council

DATE: August 9, 2010, 10:00 am – 12:30 pm

LOCATION: Oregon Department of Transportation, Region 1
 123 NW Flanders St.
 Portland, OR 97209

PROJECT SPONSORS COUNCIL ATTENDEES:

Hewitt, Henry	Co-Chair, Oregon
Horenstein, Steve	Co-Chair, Washington
Adams, Sam	Mayor, City of Portland
Bragdon, David	Council President, Metro
Garrett, Matthew	Director, Oregon Department of Transportation
Hammond, Paula	Secretary of Transportation, Washington State
Harris, Jeanne	City Councilor, City of Vancouver
Leavitt, Tim	Board Member, C-TRAN
McFarlane, Neil	General Manager, TriMet
Stuart, Steve	Chair, SW Washington Regional Transportation Council

OTHER STAFF AND PRESENTERS:

Brooks, Katy	Port of Vancouver
Warne, Tom	Chair, CRC Independent Review Panel

Note: Meeting materials and handouts referred to in this summary can be accessed online at:
<http://www.columbiarivercrossing.org/ProjectPartners/PSCMeetingMaterials.aspx>

Welcome

Co-Chairs Steve Horenstein and Henry Hewitt welcomed everyone to the meeting of the Project Sponsors Council (PSC). Co-Chair Hewitt reviewed the purpose of the meeting: To discuss the elements of the Integrated Project Sponsors Council Staff (IPS) report and to identify resulting PSC recommendations that will be forwarded to Governors Gregoire and Kulongoski.

PSC members approved the March 12 meeting summary.

Review and finalize recommendations for Governors

Co-Chairs Steve Horenstein and Henry Hewitt summarized the IPS findings and recommendations for PSC review and discussion.

Metroscope

The Metroscope land use model was run and data analyzed. A final written report will be available near the end of summer. The purpose of this task was to determine land use impacts of the CRC project, in particular, whether the project would result in sprawl to the north in Clark County by creating more capacity on the Interstate Bridge. Model results indicate that the CRC project would have negligible impact on population and employment growth in Clark County. It also shows that nowhere except in downtown Portland will the region meet its job creation targets. These results will be useful to regional and local planning officials as they discuss future planning efforts.

Discussion

Council Chair Steve Stuart commented that the two ports should be more involved in ongoing discussions about Metroscope modeling. He said that Metroscope under-reports jobs associated with port development; there are a number of planned developments that would create jobs not included in the model. Metro should work with the Port of Portland and Port of Vancouver to integrate this information into Metroscope over time.

Hayden Island interchange design

The project and its partners developed several interchange design concepts that were evaluated and shared with the public. Concepts 1 and 2 represented alternative on- and off-island concepts that were later dropped as further refinements to the interchange designs were made. Subsequent hybrid designs, Concepts A, B, C and D, incorporated elements of both the on- and off-island concepts. Concept D is the IPS recommendation.

Concept D retains freeway access both to/from the north and to/from the south. An important new feature is an arterial bridge on the west side of I-5 that crosses North Portland Harbor adjacent to, or a part of, the light rail transit crossing. This concept provides a better solution for local traffic movement and minimizes disruption to features on Hayden Island. Concept D was shared at a public meeting on August 5. There is solid support for Concept D from the Hayden Island mobile home and floating home communities, SuperCenter and nearby industrial businesses.

Discussion

Mayor Sam Adams acknowledged the successful collaboration between the project and local partners and thanked Andy Cotugno from Metro and the City of Portland team for their contributions. Mayor Adams commented that Concept D brings long-wished-for non-freeway access to Hayden Island. Furthermore, the process considered all ideas and the committee kept to a good timetable as they achieved a solution to this issue.

Alternative lane configuration on bridge

The IPS recommendation is for a 10-lane permanent bridge structure with full standard shoulders.

Co-Chair Horenstein and City of Vancouver Transportation Manager Thayer Rorabaugh convened a small working group to discuss remaining questions about how the I-5 lane configuration would work on the Washington side of the river at the bridge approach and to consider alternative lane configurations. One concept, prepared by URS, included the removal of a lane between Mill Plain and SR 14. The working group came to the conclusion that this arrangement would be problematic for safety and freight mobility, due to merging and weaving conditions and heavy freight use at the Mill Plain and Fourth Plain interchanges. These merge, weave and access issues do not occur with the Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA) Phase I lane design, which also moves vehicles in an efficient manner when compared to a 12-lane configuration. The IPS recommends the LPA Phase I southbound lane configuration to approach the bridge.

Discussion

Board Member Tim Leavitt commented that the 10-lane bridge recommendation was arrived at through further analysis and assessment with the data showing this smaller configuration works. Co-Chair Horenstein added that the URS report concluded that there was little difference in performance of a 10- and 12-lane facility.

Mayor Adams commented that the City of Portland's overriding concern is about the movement of daily congestion to downtown Portland. The URS analysis found that while the project could build to 10 lanes, it would not be responsible to build any narrower. Additional work needs to be done on non-structural design issues in the project area north of the bridge. In addition, an 8-lane striping concept for the 10-lane bridge remains a discussion item for the future.

Jeanne Harris asked that there be enough room on the shoulders to ensure public safety.

Performance Measures

The IPS found that the LPA Full Build and Phase I provide significant benefits for travel times in both the peak AM period southbound and peak PM period northbound. Furthermore, the project would minimize diversion to I-205 compared to no-build scenario and allow both corridors to work better. These benefits extend to freight traffic that primarily travels in off-peak times. Transit travel times also benefit with the project improvements through expanded light rail transit and express bus service.

Katy Brooks provided an example of 2030 travel time improvements for commuters and transit:

- *Express Bus AM peak southbound:* from 99th Street in Vancouver to downtown Portland; 47-50 minutes under no-build condition, 32 minutes with either a 10- or 12-lane build condition.
- *Automobiles AM peak southbound:* from 99th Street in Vancouver to the Morrison St. Bridge in downtown Portland; 35 minutes under no-build condition, 30 minutes with either a 10- or 12-lane build condition.
- *Automobiles PM peak northbound:* from the Morrison St. Bridge in downtown Portland to 99th Street in Vancouver; 43 minutes under no build condition, 20 minutes with either a 10- or 12-lane build condition.

Ms. Brooks explained that the differences in travel times in the AM and PM peak periods showing greater travel time benefits for the northbound commute are due to the downstream bottleneck effect at the Rose Quarter.

Travel time benefits for freight are primarily expressed in terms of off-peak travel hours; the project area would expect 22 hours of congestion in the no-build condition versus only 9 hours with either build scenario.

The IPS also addressed greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) performance measures. Modest GHG reductions are expected on a regional scale as a result of the project, but more significant GHG reductions would occur in the bridge area, by 4.4 percent.

A calculated benefit-cost ratio also showed a positive benefit-cost outcome for project costs.

Discussion

Board Member Leavitt noted that travel time examples reflect the year 2030; even greater travel time savings are expected in the post-construction period up to 2030.

Council Chair Stuart commented that more analysis should be done to ensure the project is doing everything possible to improve travel times for trucks southbound from Marine Drive.

Council Member Jeanne Harris commented that predictability and reliability of travel times are an important piece for freight mobility, in addition to travel times themselves.

Council Chair Stuart commented that benefit-cost measures should be updated to reflect changes in cost resulting from Hayden Island interchange and other project refinements. Project Director Don Wagner

responded that there is more engineering work to be done on changes to the Marine Drive and Hayden Island interchanges before this analysis can be updated. Co-Chair Hewitt added that in his opinion the benefit-cost analysis will change but continue to show the positive benefits of the project. Board Chair Stuart requested the methodology for the project's benefit-cost calculation.

Council Chair Stuart commented that a statistically valid survey should be undertaken to understand the community's willingness to pay for the benefits they can expect to receive from the project.

Post-construction Transportation Demand Management

The IPS recommends the project implement transportation demand management (TDM) tools that will reduce single-occupancy vehicle traffic in the project area after the bridge is constructed. Suggestions for tools include reduced tolls for multiple-occupancy vehicles, improved carpools and vanpools and expanded mass transit options. Post-construction TDM enhancements would be in addition to TDM measures described in the LPA that address the pre-construction and construction periods.

Discussion

Co-Chair Hewitt commented that the most difficult discussions around TDM measures will be those involving the interplay between tolls and the potential to allow multiple-occupancy vehicles to travel at a different toll rate than single-occupancy vehicles. Co-Chair Horenstein added that incentives will help drive effective TDM; the Bay Area has experience with these concepts and the project will conduct research to better understand these operations.

Council Chair Stuart commented that the region needs to look at a system-wide solution to tolling, not just in the I-5 corridor. Secretary Paula Hammond added that the CRC project will be the first part of a regional TDM strategy and a model for how projects like this are done around the country. Board Member Leavitt added that tolls will be an important incentive related to TDM and that measures should focus on incentives rather than penalizing drivers for using their vehicles.

Other issues

Co-Chair Hewitt explained the next step related to PSC findings and recommendations would be to develop a report to submit to the Governors. The draft report will be distributed to PSC members for review and include a section describing issues for further consideration in the future. Co-Chair Hewitt described a number of issues that he felt had been reflected by PSC members in the past, including the project's governance structure, finance plan and tolling, environmental review and public involvement.

In addition, the Governors have asked the two state departments of transportation to respond to the several recommendations offered by the CRC Independent Review Panel.

Discussion

PSC members offered a number of additional issues for discussion in the report to the governors.

Co-Chair Steve Horenstein commented that a focus on broader community outreach is needed. Secretary Hammond added that the IRP had noted the previous outreach process lost momentum after the draft EIS as other issues were being addressed. Council Chair Stuart agreed that the outreach effort needs to be as inclusive as possible, beyond the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process.

Council Chair Stuart asked how consulting teams will be adjusted as new project tasks are identified. He commented that this should be done in a way that is fiscally prudent. Secretary Hammond responded that the IRP also made recommendations related to how the project will be managed and delivered in the future. As these decisions are made, the project leadership will assess whether there is a need for consultant support.

Review CRC Independent Review Panel recommendations

CRC Independent Review Panel (IRP) Chair Tom Warne provided an overview of the IRP recommendations delivered to the governors. The IRP came to the conclusion that the CRC project must be built sooner rather than later. The IRP reviewed the project's work to-date and found many items that have done well up to this point. In particular, the IRP noted that environmental analysis and public outreach process started out well. The IRP made 30 recommendations offer a direct line to achieve closure on processes that are underway or items that need additional examination. Chair Warne identified the top several recommendations of the IRP:

- *Design of the Hayden Island interchange:* Good progress has been made recently on this element of the project, as discussed earlier in today's meeting.
- *Bridge type:* The open web box girder bridge type is unique. The IRP identified additional work needed to answer technical questions related to this bridge type. The decision-making process around bridge type has gone much faster than the technical analysis, so there is a need to advance the technical piece.
- *Public involvement process:* Stakeholder processes should be reinvigorated to bring more unity to the project. CRC is unlikely to have unanimity on all aspects of the project, but can achieve broader agreement.
- *Project phasing:* The IRP did not see a robust phasing plan; this is needed given the scale and financing for this project. Discussion of phasing should be included in environmental documentation. The IRP did not believe phasing was attended to sufficiently in the draft EIS. If certain financial or physical constraints required changes to the project and phasing were not included, environmental documentation may need to be re-opened, even after a Record of Decision is issued.

Chair Warne commented that there has been promising collaboration through the IPS process. He suggested that a new focus on organizational dynamics, the IRP report and its recommendations could be acted on.

Discussion

Bridge type

Mayor Sam Adams commented that of all of the elements of the IRP report, the bridge type is his greatest concern. He asked for clarification of whether a bridge of this type had been built before. Chair Warne responded that the IRP found an evolution in thought at the project on the bridge type. The open web and segmental box types are both mentioned in the draft EIS and LPA. The IRP went into the engineering community and studied this issue. There is no bridge like this in the world, but there are several that share elements or attributes. This doesn't mean an open web design shouldn't be built, but it is unique. In order to advance the bridge design, there will need to be additional due diligence on structural items of the bridge. For example, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) will require testing of the connections of beams to the deck. Any bridge that will be built will require testing and in the end nothing will be built that is not technically sound. Additional work on cost and constructability should also be performed to understand the true impacts of constructing the bridge.

Council President Bragdon asked what an evaluation of the open-web design would look like in terms of time versus other alternatives and what resources should be dedicated to this additional work. Chair Warne responded that work should begin immediately to prove the bridge concept, involving project bridge engineers and the FHWA Office of Bridge Technology. Additional field testing at universities tooled to do this work would also be part of the process. The project may want to think about alternative bridge types if the open web design encounters engineering concerns through testing, is too expensive or not the design that's desired. Secretary Hammond added that one of the recommendations of the IRP was to look at the least cost constructible design and design is one of the issues the governors want the project to address. As part of their response, two departments of transportation will be looking at what it will take

to evaluate the design and the risks and costs of reevaluating the design. In terms of re-opening the bridge design, the PSC agreed to long-term Pearson Airfield use and there are additional constraints from the Coast Guard that must also be worked within. It is difficult to measure an appropriate aesthetic design and may be a matter of “we know it when we see it.”

Bridge design

Mayor Adams asked whether the IRP had discussions about whether the open web bridge type was the most appropriate design. He noted that the open web concept evolved based on earlier two-bridge designs that had light rail and bicycle facilities in a closed box. The current design has aesthetic issues and the economic value of various designs can vary. He asked if this the right bridge type to continue with or should something else be looked-at? Chair Warne responded that the IRP’s charge was not to dictate a bridge type but to assess the work to-date. There are complex issues around bridge design including river navigation that constrains height and aviation requirements that constrain airspace from above. The bridge design needs to fit into a narrow envelope and meet many needs, including being efficient for mobility, being cost effective and reflecting well on the community.

Board Member Leavitt added that the unique bridge element the community is interested in is related aesthetics and architectural design, not to engineering. Significant additional engineering will be needed to determine whether the open web design works; it may be time to rethink the bridge type and whether a separate structure is needed. The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) has brought up concerns related to combined use and we need to be cognizant of cost, complexity and design.

Council Member Jeannie Harris commented that she wants to better understand the impact of the bridge at the Vancouver waterfront and the investments being made there. She also asked about the impact of a potential third structure crossing the river. Chair Warne responded that a third river crossing would be a complicating factor with more piers in the water. The straightest path to a project would be to follow the IRP recommendations.

Governance

Director Matt Garrett asked about the intent of the IRP with respect to the issue of governance. Chair Warne responded that the issue of governance has several elements. The project needs to complete the final EIS and receive the Record of Decision (ROD), ends to which the PSC may contribute. The IRP also recommends that the project move in the next six months to establish its construction organization, including a project manager, administered by one of the state departments of transportation. Lastly, the IRP recommends that a Mobility Council that will have wide governance be established in the next 12 months.

Mayor Adams commented that a single project manager should be in charge of the bridge design. It does not appear that one person is currently responsible for this area and the project should look to get the best available design talent for this task.

Council President Bragdon commented that the PSC should continue to serve the project, having proven its ability to develop solutions.

Station design

General Manager Neil McFarlane asked that the project continue to work with the community on transit station design.

Phasing

Co-Chair Horenstein noted that project phasing was one of the top recommendations of the IRP and asked for more detail on why this should be included in the final EIS. Chair Warne responded that the recommendations are a path forward after issuance of the ROD. If phasing is not included in the EIS, there is the possibility of reopening the NEPA process and additional analysis. It is far simpler to include this information now, whether it is used or not.

Council Member Harris asked about the relationship between project phasing and funding and how far back project plans would need to be “unrolled.” Chair Warne responded that phasing would not require the larger project to be scaled back, but would be a logical sequence for building the project and how this phasing plan works with project cash flow.

Project schedule

Council Chair Stuart asked about the additional time required beyond the beginning of next year to complete the IRP recommendations. Chair Warne responded that the IRP did not specify a timeframe in their recommendations, but members suspect it would be unrealistic to bring the project to closure in time for a ROD to be issued by January 2011. It is expected that further discussion would occur with FHWA and Federal Transit Administration (FTA) about these recommendations. Some of the IRP members most familiar with the NEPA process believe all recommendations could be completed and a ROD issued by next summer.

Council President Bragdon commented that the NEPA process may take more time to arrive at a better product. Chair Warne agreed that by following the IRP recommendations and arriving at a ROD next summer the project may go to construction sooner than moving forward without broader community support.

Secretary Hammond commented that the Departments of Transportation expect a reasonable timeframe for the passage of a reauthorized Transportation Act and agree on the need for a defensible EIS. Changes in the EIS will need to be made, for example reflecting interchange design refinements at Hayden Island. A series of next steps on these and other IRP recommendations will be provided to the governors.

Adopt PSC recommendations for Governors

Co-Chair Henry Hewitt made note of PSC member recommendations and asked the group to entertain a motion to approve the writing of a report with recommendations that would be delivered to the governors on behalf of the PSC. The Co-Chairs would develop the report for PSC member review.

Council President Bragdon motioned for the PSC co-chairs to develop a recommendations report for delivery to the governors. PSC members unanimously accepted the motion.

Next meeting

Friday, December 10, 2010 | 10:00 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

SW Region WSDOT
11018 NE 51st St.
Vancouver, WA 98662