



600 NE Grand Ave.
Portland, OR 97232-2736
oregonmetro.gov

1/4/2022

Re: Community and Advocacy Group Letter on IBR Program MTIP Amendment

To Community Partners and Advocates -

Thank you for your continued engagement and communication on issues related to the I-5 Bridge Replacement (IBR) Program. The IBR Program is critically important to the Metro Council. It includes a major multimodal project that is currently adopted in our 2018 Regional Transportation Plan that will be modified to reflect the updated outcomes of the IBR program.

We can all acknowledge the importance of the Interstate Bridge on the wellbeing of all the residents of the greater Portland region. It helps move our economy, it brings workers to our state, it helps us get out of town when we're visiting friends and family to the north. Unfortunately, there are parts of the bridge that are 104 years old, and are built not on bedrock, but on a "foundation" of timber pilings buried in the mud at the bottom of the Columbia River. I think we can all agree that it is not a piece of infrastructure ready to handle our 21st century needs – even though we are already 22 years into the 21st century.

As you are aware, the IBR Program is jointly led by the Oregon and Washington Departments of Transportation with input from a Bi-State Legislative Committee. In order to build a new multimodal bridge, the IBR Program must successfully move through a National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process and receive support from the Federal Highway Administration and the Federal Transit Administration. Metro is one of eight local participating agencies in the NEPA process along with the City of Portland, the City of Vancouver, the Southwest Regional Transportation Council (RTC), TriMet, C-Tran, the Port of Portland and the Port of Vancouver.

These agencies were invited to participate in the process to develop and analyze the range of alternatives, the methods of analysis, identify potential impacts and to provide input on how to resolve issues. Metro's participation includes Metro Councilor Peterson sitting on the 12-member Executive Steering Committee that informs the project, Metro staff participating in the technical committees and the Equity Advisory Group, and Metro staff performing technical work. The Metro Council understands that an I-5 bridge that can withstand a Cascadia Subduction Zone earthquake is essential for our region.

Metro as an organization is grounded in our values that inform the outcomes we strive for in policies, projects and programs. When it comes to transportation, Metro Council adopted the 2018 Regional Transportation Plan with four primary priorities: Equity, Safety, Climate and Congestion Relief. In addition, our Council strives for policies that promote climate



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resiliency, sustainability, equity, economic prosperity, community engagement, and creating or preserving livable spaces. These values are reflected in the input Metro Council and Metro staff are providing to the IBR Program. Metro Council has created a Values, Outcomes, and Actions (VOA) document that demonstrates its values and desired actions for the IBR Program. The Values, Outcomes, and Actions will be discussed at the January 6th, Metro Council meeting.

The entire Metro council has engaged on the IBR Program MTIP amendment carefully and are aware of what this upcoming decision means in addressing concerns and considerations for the project. Due to a technical error, we had already delayed this vote by over a month and feel strongly in moving forward with the agenda item on January 6th.

We cannot get the answers we need about this project's ability to meet our values and expectations without the work that is funded by the MTIP amendment. Many have implied that this is the last place to stop this project from proceeding. In fact, there are several more opportunities for local leaders to prevent an inappropriate bridge from being constructed over the Columbia River. But, we can't make those decisions in an informed way without proceeding with the work that the MTIP amendment proposes to fund.

The Metro Council is requesting that the IBR Program demonstrate how the multimodal project meets Metro's values. This requires conducting analysis to understand the performance of different options relative to advancing racial equity, affordability and prosperity, reducing greenhouse gas emissions and improving air quality, and engaging stakeholders through a transparent and inclusionary decision-making process. The results of this analysis must be shared with partners, stakeholders, and the public.

The Metro Council appreciates your interest in this important project. As always, we encourage on-going communication on this issue and development of robust, on-going engagement that embraces input from the public especially from Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) communities who may benefit or be impacted by this project. Our agency will continue to promote our values and demand the IBR team clearly demonstrate how the program can help our region advance them. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Kristin Dennis
Chief of Staff
Council Office