



BRIDGE REPLACEMENT PROJECT

Bi-State Working Group Meeting Summary

Monday, April 11, 2022 | 1pm – 3pm
Port of Hood River – Commission Board Room & Via Zoom
1000 E Port Marina Drive, Hood River OR 97031

In Attendance:

Members: Chair, Mike Fox (Commissioner), Port of Hood River; Vice Chair, Jake Anderson (Commissioner), Klickitat County; Catherine Kiewit (Mayor), City of Bingen; Marla Keethler (Mayor), City of White Salmon; Kate McBride (Mayor), City of Hood River; Bob Benton (Commissioner), Hood River County.

Alternates: Kristi Chapman (Commissioner), Port of Hood River; Arthur Babitz (Commissioner), Hood River County; Joe Sullivan, City of Bingen; Jason Hartmann (Councilor), City of White Salmon; David Sauter (Commissioner), Klickitat County; Jessica Metta (Councilor), City of Hood River.

Staff/Consultants: Kevin Greenwood (Project Director), Port of Hood River; Michael McElwee (Executive Director), Port of Hood River.

Guests: Matt Ransom, SWRTC

Welcome

Commissioner Fox opened the session and welcomed everyone to the meeting.

March 14 Regular Meeting Minutes

The minutes from March 14 regular meeting were approved by consensus.

Bridge Authority Governance Update

Commissioner Fox turned to Bob Benton for a brief update on the bridge authority governance. Commissioner Benton commented that one of the items they are currently working on is the Board makeup. Kevin Greenwood summarized Steve Siegel's memo that mainly focuses on tackling the makeup of the Board. The general idea is that the Board will consist of a ten-member board, half from Oregon and half from Washington. There will be 6 local government appointed members, all of whom would be voting members. Then there will be 4 state officials, two from each state, all of whom would be non-voting members. In Washington, the cities of White Salmon and Bingen will provide nominations, and the appointment of a member would be at the discretion of Klickitat County. In Oregon, the City of Hood River and Port of Hood River will provide nominations and the appointment of a Board member would be at the discretion of Hood River County. Commissioner Fox suggested adding a mechanism for the removal of a Board member.

Commissioner Anderson asked how having elected officials would impact their creditworthiness. Commissioner Benton replied that credit rating companies do not share the criteria that they use and added that from Siegel's perspective, the credit rating companies do not like Boards to have political influence. They want members of the Board to be objective. Commissioner Benton believes that Siegel's recommendation is not to have any elected officials on the Board. Benton is seeking guidance from the Bi-State Working Group (BSWG) on whether to include elected officials on the Board or not. The consensus from the BSWG was to include at least one elected official from each state. There should also be some flexibility with county appointments. Most felt that having members with specific backgrounds, skills and diversity was important.

Commissioner Fox asked what they would be reviewing next. Greenwood replied that they would be looking at where the headquarters would be located for the new Bi-State Bridge Authority (BSBA). Greenwood noted that they will work with Brad Boswell and Miles Pengilly to see what it will take to get someone from the state appointed. Mayor McBride asked if those appointments would be compensated. Greenwood replied that he did not know, but it is something that should be considered.

Tolling Policy Discussion

Greenwood commented that the Port's 10-Year Model (Model) is a planning tool for seeing the effects of different assumptions over a ten-year period. The Model includes a toll increase in early 2023 and then again in 2026 to create a new reserve fund focused on bridge replacement needs. Commissioner Fox commented that they are trying to create a reserve off the current bridge that the new bridge could tap into and could also be used to show that they are building reserves for bonding. Commissioner Fox asked if this is something the BSWG would like to move forward with. Commissioner Anderson asked if this was the Ports money or if it was for the new bridge authority. Commissioner Fox replied that currently all funds are being funneled through the Port but eventually it will go directly to the BSBA.

Michael McElwee noted that there are three objectives for the BSWG and the BSBA. First objective should be to have funds available for operation costs such as staffing. The second objective is to create a reserve fund that is not associated with the issuance of debt. Third objective is to demonstrate a history of toll increases to help show creditworthiness. McElwee provided a brief overview of the Model. During Spring Planning the Commission discussed the notion of creating a new reserve that would be added on as a new line item on the Model called Bridge Replacement. This reserve would be tied to the toll increase. The assumption is that the toll increase would happen in 2023 with a 13% increase. McElwee fielded questions or comments from the BSWG.

The BSWG members suggested operational changes that could provide cost savings that would be directed to the reserve fund. It was also noted that a description was needed to show how the 2018 toll increase was used. The BSWG recommended identifying all allocated costs of the Port toward the bridge replacement. Another recommendation was to describe the Ports actions to achieve non-bridge fiscal sustainability by 2030. The consensus was to establish a stand-alone bridge replacement fund, but further discussion was needed on how to fund it.

Project Updates/Other Items

Greenwood commented that on April 12, he will meet with WSP for a presentation with Nez Perce Executive Committee regarding the treaty agreements. There is a Yakima Nation planning meeting on April 13. There is also another meeting on April 13 with Federal Highways to review the build grant agreement documents. Section 106 consulting party meeting comments are being compiled. The Arup contract was

approved by the Port Commission. On April 14 will be the first meeting with Washington Transportation Committee staff to learn about the \$1.5 million that was in the bill for traffic and revenue study. Commissioner Fox requested a report that demonstrates the status of all funding elements.

Replacement Bridge Management Contract Update

Commissioner Fox commented that bids are due April 22. There will be a training on April 21 for the six evaluators. Interviews begin May 9 and 10, and Committee recommendations will be on May 11. Negotiations will begin May 18.

Commissioner Fox noted that the Port has an office space available that could be used as the RBMC headquarters. There would be no out-of-pocket cost other than utilities. Commissioner Fox offered to give a tour to the BSWG members. There was consensus to proceed with the Hood River office location.

Adjourn

Next meeting is scheduled for May 13 at 2:30pm.

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