



BRIDGE REPLACEMENT PROJECT

Bi-State Working Group Meeting Summary

Monday, March 20, 2023 | 2:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.
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; Paul Blackburn (Mayor), City of Hood River; Arthur Babitz (Commissioner), Hood River County; Catherine Kiewit (Mayor), City of Bingen.

Alternates: None

Staff/Consultants: Michael Shannon (Project Manager), HNTB; Brian Munoz, HNTB; Steve Siegel, Siegel Consulting; Debbie Smith-Wagar (Finance Director), Port of Hood River; Kary Witt, HNTB; Jessica Pickul, JLA.

Guests: Mary Francoeur; Sam Hunaidi, ODOT; Denis Reich, ODOT; Carl See, WSTC; Lowell Clary; M. Laviole; Kelly O’Grady-Smith; Katy Asher; Jennifer Rash; Gardesyrr.

Welcome

Commissioner Mike Fox called the meeting to order at 2:01 p.m.

Approval of Minutes

The Bi-State Working Group (BSWG) minutes for March 20, 2023 were approved by consensus.

Informational Items

- a. **GR Updates** – Michael Shannon, HNTB Project Manager, noted that Executive Director Kevin Greenwood is currently in Washington D.C. at the PNWA Mission to Washington conference. Shannon commented that he attended meetings that were held with Senator Marko Liias and Senator Curtis King. Both meetings were positive. Sen. King noted that there is a recommendation for funding this year of \$15 million and recurring funding over the next few years of \$30 million for the Bridge Replacement Project (“Project”). A request was made to receive funds sooner.

Commissioner Fox discussed his proposal that will be presented to the Port of Hood River (“Port”) Commission tomorrow night. The proposal defines a strategy to eliminate the Port’s reliance on current bridge tolls and increase funding of Port operations.

- b. **Grant Update** – Shannon noted that all federal appropriations have been completed and submitted. A discussion ensued regarding upcoming federal grants and whether they should apply or wait till the coming year.

- c. **Treaty Tribe MOA's** – Shannon reported that a meeting has been scheduled with the Warm Springs Tribe for March 22, and a second meeting with Umatilla has been scheduled for March 23. Nez Perce was given a draft Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) for comments. HNTB followed up with Yakima Nation regarding their review of the MOA and is waiting for their response.
- d. **RBMC** – Shannon provided a brief overview of Amendment 3 to HNTB's contract. There was consensus from the BSWG to present Amendment 3 to the Port Commission for approval.

Funding Finance & Tolling

Carl See, WSTC, provided an update on the Hood River Bridge Traffic & Revenue Study and presented two final tolling scenarios. Per BSWG direction the scenarios incorporate a toll funding range of \$75 - \$125 million. The scenarios apply a \$2 differential to Scenario "A" and apply escalation on video rates to Scenario "B". Pre-completion toll rates apply the BSWG Scenario 3 (\$1.75/\$3.50) to Scenario "A" and apply BSWG Scenario 5 (\$2.00/\$3.00) to Scenario "B". Both scenarios apply a toll rate increase upon bridge opening in FY31. A discussion followed regarding the final tolling scenarios. Commissioner Jake Anderson recommends a \$2 differential beginning in FY31 to match state of Washington's tolling policy and requested to see what that would look like for Scenario "B". The BSWG requested more time to consider the options before making a final recommendation to the Port Commission.

NEPA/FEIS/ROD

Shannon reported that they have received comments from Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) regarding sections of the Biological Opinion (BiOp) that have developed. WSP will have responses to their comments by March 22. Shannon requested a status update from ODOT on the BiOp and is waiting for a response. A meeting is also scheduled with National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) on March 29 to discuss the BiOp. Shannon introduced Denis Reich, ODOT, who was available for questions. Shannon added that Section 106 MOA is progressing. Commissioner Fox expressed his frustration regarding the delay with the completion of the BiOp. A discussion ensued in reference to the status of the BiOp. Commissioner Anderson requested information on how the liaison positions operate in reference to the BiOp to have a better understanding of the process. Reich will gather that information and provide it to the BSWG.

Reich noted a couple reasons why this project might have been delayed. One reason is that it is rare to have an endangered species consultation on a project of this scale with minimal design information. Another reason is the I-205 Abernethy Bridge Project, where many things have been learned in a quick amount of time, related to how bridges are constructed and the level of impacts. Commissioner Anderson asked if Reich could investigate how much of the BiOp has been completed. Reich replied that he will try to seek out that information.

New Action Items

- a. Tolling scenario with a \$2 differential applied to Scenario "B".
- b. Provide the BSWG with information on how the liaison positions operate in reference to the BiOp.
- c. Determine the status of the BiOp.
- d. Provide a schedule to BSWG for the RFP process.

Adjourn

Shannon commented that they are working with ODOT on the Request for Proposal (RFP) for Progressive Design Build as they will own a portion of the project. Commissioner Fox requested a schedule for the RFP process. Commissioner Fox also noted that they have signed off on the labor agreement. Next meeting is on April 3. The meeting was adjourned at 3:51 p.m.

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