



BRIDGE REPLACEMENT PROJECT

Environmental Impact Statement Working Group Adopted Charter

Charter Purpose

The purpose of this charter is to define the role of the Working Group to support the completion of project work associated with National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) compliance for a replacement Hood River-White Salmon Bridge. The Charter describes how the Working Group will work together with the project team (Port of Hood River and consultant staff) to achieve the goal of attaining a Record of Decision from the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA).

Background

The Port of Hood River has owned and operated the Hood River-White Salmon Bridge since 1950. The 4,418-foot steel truss bridge was originally constructed in 1924. It provides a critical, bi-state transportation link in the heart of the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area. The bridge is over 30 years past its design life. It frequently creates a hazardous traffic bottleneck during closures of I-84 in Oregon or SR-14 in Washington. It has undersized travel lanes for today's vehicles, and no pedestrian or bicycle facilities. The 80,000-pound weight limit restricts vehicle freight movement; and the narrow, poorly aligned horizontal clearance with the navigation channel presents the greatest navigational hazard on the entire Columbia/Snake River federal inland waterway system according to towboat operators. For these reasons, the Port of Hood River is continuing the bridge replacement effort that has been underway since the 1990s. As recipient of funding from the Oregon Legislature and facility owner, the Port is leading the next critical step by completing an environmental impact statement (EIS) in compliance with NEPA.

Problem Statement

The obsolete bridge connecting Washington and Oregon between White Salmon and Hood River needs replacement to support the safety, economic vitality and quality of life for people and water quality in the Columbia River Gorge. Completion of the NEPA environmental review is the next essential step in the replacement process. This work best positions our community for future funding, permitting and construction of a new bridge.

The Port of Hood River Commission will work collaboratively with agency partners in Washington and Oregon and stakeholders to move the NEPA analysis forward. The Working Group provides a key component of the partner and stakeholder involvement process.

Role of the Working Group

The Working Group is a discussion body to aid the NEPA analysis project team, which includes staff from the WSP consulting team and Port of Hood River. As leaders and well-informed representatives, Working Group members will provide guidance and information to the project team on key inputs to the analysis and recommendations as the EIS is developed. Collectively, the members of the Working Group are united in their belief that replacement of the Hood River-White Salmon Bridge must proceed without delay. The current facility does not meet current or future needs of the region's residents, businesses, visitors or natural environment. It is the desire of the members that the NEPA phase conclude as quickly as possible.

The project team will work with members throughout the process to ensure that concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered as alternatives or options are developed. Project staff will explain how Working Group and community input influenced the preferred alternative before submitting the Final EIS to FHWA for a Record of Decision.

The scope for Working Group discussions is consistent with the scope of work for the consulting team supporting the NEPA analysis, and includes the following:

| DISCUSSION TOPICS | |
|---|---|
| What's in | What's out |
| Completion of the NEPA process | Non-NEPA decisions |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Community outreach• Environmental and traffic analysis results and potential mitigation recommendations• Supplemental Draft EIS• Final EIS• Bridge aesthetics and design• Permit planning assistance | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Governance of the replacement bridge• Toll rates for the replacement bridge• Funding for final design and construction for the replacement bridge, including demolition of the existing bridge• Financing plan |

Changes to the Preliminary Preferred Alternative will require approval by the involved local governments who participated in the Draft EIS process. As an example, it is assumed that the preliminary preferred alternative, EC-2(Existing Corridor, Alignment 2), will remain the preferred alignment as described in the 2003 Draft Environmental Impact Statement. If the preferred alignment changes, a process will be developed to gain concurrence from the local entities that previously endorsed EC-2.

Discussion topics and decisions that are outside of the scope of the NEPA analysis are known to be of great interest to agency partners and stakeholders in the community. These topics will be discussed and decided in forums separate from the Working Group or after completion of the NEPA process. When these topics are raised during the Working Group meetings, the facilitator will identify them and ensure they are catalogued so the project team may to communicate the alternate timing and location for those discussions.

Membership

The Working Group includes about 11 members representing interests from local government, ports, and regional transportation planning organizations. Elected officials on the group will also represent the interests of their constituents. The organizations represented include:

- City of Bingen
- City of Hood River
- City of White Salmon
- Columbia River Gorge Commission
- Hood River County
- Klickitat County
- ODOT Region 1 Area Commission on Transportation
- Port of Hood River
- Port of Klickitat
- SW Washington Regional Transportation Council

Staff from other agencies may participate as subject matter experts in an ex officio manner. Four Native American tribes with treaty rights in the project area are being engaged through government to government consultation to provide input to the project.

Roles and Responsibilities

Working Group Members

Working Group members are expected to:

- Prepare for and attend Working Group meetings and project events
- Have robust discussions and provide feedback on “What’s In” NEPA elements listed in the table on page 2
- Be proactive about sharing comments and ideas about the project EIS analysis process during the meetings
- Advise the project team on community involvement efforts
- Engage with personal and/or professional networks about the project and bring information learned back to the Working Group to aid with discussions
- Consider public input when providing feedback to the project team

Project Staff

The Port of Hood River and the WSP Consultant Team make up the project staff. Project staff agree to the following commitments.

- Provide timely, relevant, and objective information necessary to inform Working Group input
- Supply Working Group members with resources necessary to complete their scope of tasks
- Inform Working Group members monthly in writing on NEPA and non-NEPA project activities or advancements.
- Maintain and report an ongoing record of public comments and questions
- Coordinate public involvement activities
- Collect Working Group input in advance of finalizing the preferred alternative, Supplemental Draft EIS and Final EIS.
- Work with the facilitator, and Working Group members to ensure an accurate summary of all input and outcomes are reflected in the meeting notes

Facilitator

The Port has provided an independent facilitator to help prepare meeting agendas, design meeting processes and ensure Working Group meetings are fair and productive. This includes:

- Keeping meetings to the start and end times identified on meeting agendas
- Maintaining a neutral stance on project topics
- Ensuring all members have meaningful opportunities to provide input
- Encouraging constructive discussion of subjects and considering multiple perspectives
- Orienting discussions toward meeting objectives and project goals
- Concluding discussions that are off topic or not constructive
- Serving as a resource for Working Group members and the project team outside of meetings to communicate ideas, opinions or process concerns

Port of Hood River Commission

The Port of Hood River Commission currently makes decisions related to bridge maintenance, operations and toll rates. The body is overseeing the consultant contract for the NEPA process and the deliverables to meet the terms stated in the ODOT grant agreement. In this role, the Commission will:

- Assure NEPA contracting and legal requirements are met
- Have representation on the Working Group to liaison between the Commission and the members
- Encourage and listen for documentation of consensus among all Working Group members before moving ahead with NEPA related actions
- Sign the EIS documents
- Participate in “non-NEPA” discussions outside of the Working Group process

Meeting Protocols

Ground Rules

All meeting participants agree to abide by the following ground rules.

- Silence electronics.
- Ask questions of each other to gain clarity and understanding.
- Express yourself in terms of your preferences, interests and outcomes you wish to achieve
- Listen respectfully and try sincerely to understand the needs and interest of others.
- Honor each other by being honest and authentic.
- Consider the needs and concerns of people outside your own community and not present in the room.
- Be curious and willing to learn and contribute.
- Respect timelines by being concise and brief with comments and questions.
- Seek common ground.

Time Commitment and Attendance

Working Group members will meet approximately 6-8 times between November 2018 and December 2020. Working Group meetings will be about 2 hours in length and will be held weekdays during the late afternoon/early evening at locations in Hood River, White Salmon or

Bingen. Meetings will alternate between Oregon and Washington locations. The Port of Hood River will provide refreshments for Working Group members.

Consistent attendance and participation is desired. If a Working Group member misses two consecutive meetings, the Working Group members may seek to exchange the member with someone who can attend meetings consistently.

Feedback Mechanisms

As topics come before the Working Group for discussion, the various perspectives and opinions communicated by the members will be documented. In some cases hand signals (thumb up, thumb to the side, thumb down) or other methods for collective input may be used.

Working Group members are encouraged to seek consensus, but it is not required. Areas of agreement will be noted in the meeting summary. Final decisions related to the NEPA analysis and documentation will be made by the Port of Hood River Commission, as the owner of the facility and as the agency contracted by ODOT to produce the Final EIS, and by FHWA as the lead federal agency.

Public Comment

Members of the public are welcome to attend Working Group meetings and listen. Notice of Working Group meetings will be posted on the project website in advance.

Only project staff, invited speakers, and members of the Working Group may sit at the meeting table to participate in discussions. Working Group meeting agendas will reserve time for public comment and questions to project staff. Time available for each commenter will be dependent on the number of people wanting to speak during the allotted agenda time. The facilitator may shorten the time allotted to each commenter if needed to keep the Working Group's work on schedule. Project staff will be available at each meeting to address questions from the public. Written comments received during a Working Group meeting will be included in the meeting summary. If public comments include specific questions that project staff can address, the response will be added to the meeting summary.

Meeting Agendas and Meeting Materials

The facilitator will work with project staff to develop agendas for the meetings. Working Group members may propose topics for future meeting agendas, and staff will consider requests within the scope of the NEPA process. Meeting agendas and meeting materials will be sent electronically to Working Group members one week in advance of meetings and will be posted on the project website. Hard copy packets will be provided at each meeting.

In addition to NEPA topics, time will be reserved at each meeting for the Port of Hood River to provide an update on activities and news related to the existing Hood River Bridge.

Meeting Summaries

Project staff will prepare draft and final Working Group meeting summaries. Draft meeting summaries will be sent to Working Group members electronically for review. Any edits to meeting summaries will be addressed at the following meeting. . Draft meeting summaries will be placed on the WG's webpage and reviewed at the next available WG meeting.

Guidelines for Communication Outside of Working Group Meetings

Email and Informal Conversations

Working Group members may communicate with project staff or the facilitator outside of formal meetings to share ideas and request information. Working Group members, project staff and the facilitator are encouraged to adhere to the same ground rules of respect outside of formal meetings.

Media

Working Group members may not respond to inquiries from the media on behalf of the Working Group. Working Group members may respond as individuals. Members of the Working Group are encouraged to direct any inquiries from members of the media to the Port's Project Director and, if not available, the Communications Manager for the POHR to coordinate a response.

Work Plan and Tentative Schedule

The work plan below outlines the topics to be discussed in Working Group meetings and other community involvement activities. The work plan will be updated as work progresses.

| Item | Date | Topics |
|--|-----------------|---|
| WG Meeting #1 | Nov. 8, 2018 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draft charter • Project purpose, history and EIS schedule • Preliminary preferred alternative |
| Project Re-launch Open House | December 2018 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project purpose, history and EIS schedule • Preliminary preferred alternative |
| WG Meeting #2 | Winter 2019 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Navigational clearance coordination with USCG update • Traffic analysis • Public outreach update • Final charter |
| Optional: Bridge Tour | Spring 2019 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gain familiarity with facility structure and operations |
| WG Meeting #3 | Spring 2019 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Toll sensitivity analysis • Environmental justice outreach results • Bicycle and pedestrian connections |
| WG Meeting #4 | Summer 2019 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bridge architecture and aesthetic treatments • • Bicycle and pedestrian facility design on the bridge |
| WG Meeting #5 | Winter 2020 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environmental impact analysis for SDEIS |
| SDEIS Open House and Public Hearing | ~ Spring 2020 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SDEIS review and comment |
| WG Meeting #6 | ~ Summer 2020 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of agency and public comments on SDEIS • Additional analysis for FEIS |
| WG Meeting #7 | ~Fall 2020 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public outreach results • FEIS Mitigation measures |
| FEIS/Record of Decision | ~Late fall 2020 | |
| WG Meeting #8 | Early 2021 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conclusion of NEPA phase • Looking forward to position for next phase |