

***Hood River-White Salmon Interstate Bridge Replacement
Environmental Impact Study Working Group
Meeting Minutes of September 12, 2019
White Salmon Fire Hall, 119 NE Church White Salmon Washington
3:00 p.m.***

THESE MINUTES ARE NOT OFFICIAL until approved by the Working Group at the next regular meeting.

4:00 P.M.

Working Group Meeting #4

Present: Matt Ransom, Rich McBride, Kristi Chapman, Jon Davies, Jan Brending, Tim Counihan, Lorrie DeKay, David Sauter, John Everitt, Anne Pressentin, Scott Keilor, Michael McElwee, Mark Hirota, Emily Fitzgerald, Scott Paulson, Michael Williams, James Lombardo, Garrett Mosier, Kevin Greenwood, Betty Barnes.

1. CALL TO ORDER: Anne Pressentin, Outreach Coordinator for the WSP, called the meeting to order at 4:00PM.

a. Approval of Meeting Summary for May 23: Ms. Pressentin asked for comments or corrections to the draft meeting minutes form May 23. None voiced, minutes approved.

2. PROJECT UPDATES: Kevin Greenwood, Project Director for the Port of Hood River, introduced two issues for consideration by the group: updates to the bike/ped connection design concepts, and recent public outreach events with survey results. Mr. Greenwood introduced WSP engineer Mark Hirota to provide details on the design updates to the bike/ped connections.

a. Mark Hirota, WSP engineer provided details on the bike/ped connection design planning at each approach, noting that all alternatives (EC1, EC2, and EC3) all have the bike/ped crossing on the west side of the bridge. The projected image wasn't displaying properly, so Mr. Greenwood asked Mr. Keillor to present his report while it was being set up differently.

b. Scott Keillor, WSP community outreach staff reported on recent community outreach events that took place at the Huckleberry Festival and the Bingen Food Bank with Next Door Inc., WA/OR Action Program. At each event, WSP staff conducted surveys to collect public input on design elements and also bridge use types. WSP received about 100 responses to the surveys and fielded questions. The Bingen Food Bank event provided an opportunity to survey Spanish-speaking community members about the reasons they use the current bridge and would use the replacement bridge. 10 out of 10 respondents stated that they use the current bridge for commuting to work and use of the new bridge would depend on the toll rate, with The Dalles bridge a likely alternative. Respondents also noted they would use the new bridge for exercise, to enjoy the view of the Gorge. They asked about what parking would be available for people wanting to just use the bike/ped facility. There was clarification about ID required to open a BreezeBy prepaid electronic tolling account – Port staff reported that ID is not required, just the license plate of the vehicle. Mr. Keillor announced that the next public house would be tied to the release of the Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statement (SDEIS), and would be focused on collecting public comment on the SDEIS.

c. Mark Hirota, WSP Engineer – With the projection screen functioning properly, Mr. Hirota continued his report. He reported that currently there are no changes being made to the design for the bike/ped connection on the WA approach, however, if a roundabout is installed at the intersection with SR14 then that would need to be revisited. The OR side landing previously was designed to end with the bridge, with a serpentine path for ADA permissible inclines, but now is planned to extend via the sidewalk to the intersection of Button Bridge Rd. and Port Marina Way.

3. SUPPLEMENTAL DRAFT EIS UPDATE (SDEIS): Ms. Pressentin introduced Scott Paulson, WSP Environmental Lead, to present an update on the SDEIS. Mr. Paulson reported that most of the technical reports are complete or under review. The internal draft of the SDEIS was submitted on September 4. The effort reviewed the 2003 Alternatives, EC 1, EC2, and EC3, and the selection of option EC2 as the Preliminary Preferred Alternative. The 2019 review re-screened all the alternated with updated engineering techniques. The roadway connections were re-evaluated, and the EC1 Alternative stood out as having some constructability issues that may now make that Alternative more clearly unfeasible. The elevations needed to cross the railroad at that location are hindered by the concurrent dip in the grade of the roadway, which would require the SR14 roadway to be raised 17 feet. Mr. Paulson presented the question to the Group whether it would be best to eliminate EC1 from consideration. For discussion purposes, Mr. Paulson shared a table illustrating the criteria review matrix, with each alternative showing and categories of project impacts ranked from Low to High, pointing out that EC1's construction impacts would be very high. He fielded several questions from attendees and there was general discussion of the relative rankings in each category for each alternative. There was consensus direction to change the verbiage in the charge that reads "Improvement" to "Impact." Anne Pressentin again called the question of whether the recommendation from the Working Group that EC1 be dropped from consideration move forward and the consensus was yes, it should be dropped.

4. BRIDGE CONCEPTUAL VISUALIZATIONS: Mark Hirota introduced the conceptual design illustrations noting that there are two broad categories of visual experiences to consider; the visuals one would experience while on the bridge, and the visuals of the bridge itself as viewed from different locations off the bridge. Mr. Hirota explained that the team wanted to develop visualizations for both categories, and within those, set up three style categories, labelled "Historic," "I-84 Design," and "Contemporary." He led a review of these different design approaches and asked for feedback. Comments received were as follows:

- Dave Sauter: What is the plan to decide on the design, what is the process? Kevin Greenwood replied that there is no set plan or process yet, that ODOT has offered to form an aesthetics committee that could potentially be a role filled by this group, noted that Gorge Commission would certainly be involved in final design decisions in compliance with the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area Act, but that until the project has a funding package determined with controlling parties, it's difficult to identify the final design process, however, opportunities for public input like this will be valuable and recorded throughout the development process. Mr. Hirota noted that the FEIS process can continue without a firm design approach as it relates to the look of the new bridge, versus the structure. He details that the requirements for design components include crash-tested bridge rail, lighting and the spacing of lights, but that there is no standard for the height of the rail, although WSP is recommending a height of 42"-54".
- Jan Brending: prefers a combination of the "Historical" and the "I-84" design components, likes the historical lighting design concepts, and also the archways.
- Betty Barnes: likes the "Historical" set because it blends with the "I-84" set.
- Kristi Chapman: using a "Contemporary" design can actually instantly make a facility dated. The new bridge should have a timeless look.
- Jon Davies asked for more details on the roadway lighting and the pathway lighting and Mr. Hirota further discussed those.

- Tim Counihan: Discourages counting out the “Contemporary” look noting that at one point the current bridge was a contemporary design.
- Jon Davies noted that the bridge won’t be invisible, and a modern looking bridge is something to consider.
- There was consensus that it’s too early to come to any direction on design.
- Anne Pressentin raised the question to the group of whether the exercise itself was helpful now. The general consensus was that it’s helpful because the public wants to see how the project might come together and that it can generate excitement for the project.
- Dave Sauter asked whether cost comparisons for each different approach were significant.
- There was further discussion on the potential decision making process and the public involvement in it.
- Rich McBride noted that this public discussion would at least serve to inform the ultimate decision makers. He asked whether, at the end of the FEIS process, does design need to be final? Mr. Hirota and Mr. Paulson answered no.

5. COMMENTS FROM OBSERVERS: Ms. Pressentin called for comments from the meeting observers.

- Karen Jenkins, White Salmon resident, commented that if there were to be a roundabout needed at the intersection of SR14 and the bridge, is the cost of that facility included in the bridge funding? Michael Williams answered that there is currently no funding for such a facility in the WSDOT budget, there is funding at the planning level, but not for that facility specifically.
- Emily Fitzgerald, reporter for the Hood River News, noted that older project publications cite 2028 as a date for project completion and asked whether that is still a good date. Kevin Greenwood answered that date was purely conceptual and a stated aspirational goal, with lots of assumptions behind it and shouldn’t be used as a solid date. Emily asked whether the FEIS document and Record of Decision would have a determined shelf life. Mr. Hirota answered that it doesn’t expire, but as time goes by, the chances that it would need to be reviewed before construction would be permitted increases. David Sauter remarked that in his experience in Klickitat County, these documents have about a 5-year life span.
- Rich McBride asked whether any agency was currently working on the phase that would follow the completion of this one. Kevin Greenwood answered that the Port of Hood River is currently examining what would be the project elements needed in the next phase, i.e., what percentage of design and engineering, how much federal funding, what about governance and ownership issues, and so on.
- Jan Brending commented that stakeholders on both sides of the river need to continue to reach out to their legislative representatives to express the importance of this project, noting that is the #1 priority on the regional Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy administered by MCEDD.
- Rich McBride asked whether a Public-Private Partnership was being considered for ultimate project delivery. Kevin Greenwood answered that at this point all options are on the table.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:36 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Genevieve Scholl