



BRIDGE REPLACEMENT PROJECT

Bi-State Working Group Meeting Summary

Monday, June 14, 2021 | 2 p.m.
Port of Hood River – via Zoom

In Attendance:

Committee: Betty Barnes (Mayor), City of Bingen; Marla Keethler, City of White Salmon; Kate McBride (Mayor), City Hood River; Jake Anderson (Commissioner), Klickitat County; Bob Benton (Commissioner), Hood River County; Kristi Chapman (Commissioner), Port of Hood River – Alternate; Arthur Babitz (Commissioner), Hood River County – Alternate.

Consultants: Steve Siegel, Siegel Consulting; Hal Hiemstra, Summit Strategies; Gordon Kelsie, Klickitat County Public Works.

Guests: Washington State Senator Curtis King, Matt Ransom, SWRTC;

Staff: Michael McElwee, Executive Director; Kevin Greenwood, Bridge Replacement Project Director

Media: None.

Updates:

Hal Hiemstra provided a brief update on what is happening at the federal level with the infrastructure debate. The Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works passed its reauthorization bill for \$311 billion that was focused on highways and bridges. The bill includes \$3.265 billion for a new bridge program and \$2 billion for a rural surface transportation grant program. It's likely that there will be a bipartisan bill through the senate by end of July, which may not include earmarked projects.

In the House, there are several earmarked projects but none that include the Hood River-White Salmon bridge. Representative Jaime Herrera Beutler from Washington did put in a \$5 million request for the Hood River – White Salmon Bridge but the \$20 million was spent on other project requests before she could get to the \$5 million request for the Hood River-White Salmon Bridge. On the Oregon side, Representative Cliff Bentz choose not to submit any requests for projects.

Senator King reported that they are still pushing forward with the transportation package for the state of Washington. Sen. King received a call from the Regional Director of DOT asking how the \$5 million that was received in this session's budget would be transmitted. Sen. King noted that the plan is for the \$5 million to go through DOT, then Klickitat County (which will get their buy off), and finally given to the state of Oregon who will then give it to the Port of Hood River.

Kevin Greenwood asked if a letter campaign would help show that there is local interest. Hiemstra replied that at the federal level, launching a new letter to emphasize the principles and values, and the need for significant federal investment for the bridge would be a good idea. Sen. King commented that at the state level its best not to write a letter at this time.

Governance Strategy

Steve Siegel's presentation provided an overview for a long-term governance strategy of the replacement bridge. The Bi-State Working Group (BSWG) will prepare and propose Bi-State legislation also known as "Compact". The Compact will establish the Bi-State Authority (Commission) during the 2022 or 2023 legislative sessions. The Commission will own, build fund, operate, and maintain the new bridge. Siegel noted that he should have the first draft of the Compact released before the end of June for review. Siegel also reviewed the board procedures. As well as the organization of Commission and Powers of Commission.

Sen. King commented that neither Oregon nor Washington would like to take ownership of the new bridge. And is curious as to whether they really need to have a voting member from each state on the Commission. Sen. King also noted that P3s in the state of Washington have not always been favored; possibly due to the previous leader in the House who believed that the cost would increase about 10% with a P3.

Betty Barnes asked if it would be best for the county's legal counsel to review the Compact. Siegel replied yes, but he is not discouraging the use of city attorneys as well.

Michael McElwee asked Siegel if the Washington Department of Justice (DOJ) would go through WSDOT. Siegel replied yes, WSDOT would make the request to DOJ to review it. McElwee asked in terms of the underwriting if there was a difference on whether it was an interlocal or a Bi-State Compact. Siegel replied that it was likely that they would want to move away from wanting a to do a Bi-State agreement.

Adjourn

Greenwood noted that the Committee might be receiving invitations to participate as consulting party members to review impacts to historic and archaeological structures. The Port of Hood River, Klickitat County, and City of White Salmon will also receive 4(f) letters and will need administrative concurrence regarding the proposed Riverfront Park in Washington. Greenwood also noted that the build funds may not be immediately available, and Staff has indicated that it may be best to create an owner's representation project management contract to help keep the project moving. Next meeting is scheduled for July 12.

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