

Bicycle Advisory Committee Meeting
City Hall, Lovejoy Room
6-8:00pm | September 10th, 2019

BAC Members Present: Christopher Achterman, Reza Farhoodi, Catherine Gould, Sarah Iannarone, Rithy Khut, Iain MacKenzie, David Stein, Alexandra Zimmerman

BAC Members Absent: Clint Culpepper, Alexa Jakusovsky, Phil Richman

PBOT Staff Present: Roger Geller, Owen Slyman, Patrick Sweeney

Other Attendees: Jon Henrichsen, Marvin Rambo, Peter Bourke, Jonathan Maus, Nyla Clark, Joshua Cohen

Guest Presenters: Jon Henrichsen (Multnomah County), Steve Drahota (HDR), Patrick Sweeney (PBOT)

I. Earthquake Ready Burnside Bridge Project

Jon Henrichsen from Multnomah County, Steve Drahota from HDR, and Patrick Sweeney from PBOT presented on the current status of the Earthquake Ready Burnside Bridge project, a project owned by Multnomah County and led by PBOT. Currently, the project is in the community outreach phase. Drahota explained that the region is highly susceptible to seismic activity in the Cascadia Subduction Zone, and that the last major earthquake occurred 317 years ago, exceeding 75% of intervals between major quakes to strike Oregon over the last 10,000 years. The project involves either retrofitting or replacing the Burnside Bridge to remain fully operational and accessible post-earthquake, as Burnside is a regionally-recognized lifeline route. A BAC member asked whether the I-405 overpass was vulnerable and noted that the tunnels along Burnside may need to be retrofitted, should they also be vulnerable. Drahota answered that the project would be looking at the stability of this infrastructure.

In terms of project timeline, Drahota noted that the project was coming off a feasibility study from 2016 to 2018, which can be found online and looked at 125+ options for crossing the river. Currently, the project is pre-National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), in

the design refinement and outreach phase. The next steps will be the design phase (currently funded) and the construction phase (currently unfunded). Drahota shared potential project funding sources, including a County vehicle registration fee for the planning, design, and construction phases, the Metro Regional T2020 bond, and State and Federal funding for the construction phase. Current Multnomah County vehicle registration fees are \$19/year, which a proposal would raise to \$56/year. This proposal will be voted on by the County board on 11/7/19 and would become effective on 1/1/2021, with funding dedicated to bridges that cross the Willamette river.

A BAC member asked if the County had learned any lessons from the Sellwood Bridge, where Clackamas County users were not taxed for the bridge replacement even though many made use of the bridge. The member asked if the County was considering tolling as a strategy for the Burnside Bridge, which Drahota answered was not a consideration at the moment.

Another BAC member asked how much a \$56/year vehicle registration fee would raise; Drahota answered that it would raise about \$300-400 million over 20 years, which would fund about 1/3 of the total project cost.

Jon Henrichsen of Multnomah County detailed the project's decision-making framework. Groups include a community task force, which develops recommendations that are rolled up to decisionmakers, as well as around 10 working groups, which consist of agency-involved individuals, that send technical and policy advice to the community task force. A BAC member asked how the task force was selected; Henrichsen answered that it was formed through an application process that ended up selecting around 25 members.

Another BAC member asked whether west side users would be matching funds, or if there were other cost-sharing options in the works. Drahota responded that there is no concrete answer at the moment, but funding is an element of the required NEPA documentation. The County has not yet engaged in a robust dialogue on cost sharing and hopes to find money through the partnership.

Drahota then presented the 4 alternatives under evaluation, noting that the County is not selecting an actual bridge type right now but just selecting alternatives to evaluate. All alternatives are designed to carry special loads and very heavy vehicles post-seismic event.

Alternative 1 is an enhanced seismic retrofit of the existing structure, which would also include replacing the foundation over I-5 and the railroad line on the east side. Alternative 2 is a complete replacement of the existing structure with a raised fixed bridge, which Drahota noted would be unlikely to move forward due to the required height and concerns with entry and exit alignment. Alternative 3 is also a complete replacement, but with a movable structure similar to the current configuration. This alternative would also create a 2-foot buffer between the bridge and the buildings that currently butt up against it to ensure greater seismic safety. Alternative 4 is similar to Alternative 3, but it would create a second bridge entrance where the current Couch couplet is. This would mean that bicyclists and pedestrians would have to find another route than that currently used from the Central Eastside west of Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd. (3rd Avenue to/from Couch Court).

A BAC member asked how Alternative 4 is viable, given bridgehead and Couch Ct. concerns. Drahota responded that they have heard concerns about impacts to pedestrian and bicycle circulation as well as a mixed reaction from developers and the community around the Couch couplet. Drahota added that the project is on the table because the current configuration, involving a tight S-curve, may not be favorable for the modes that use it, as well as a potentially better route for future streetcar development. However, Drahota noted, the proposed Couch connection may not be meaningfully better, and the initial benefits of Alternative 3 are seeming less and less so as the project moves forward.

Another BAC member asked whether the project would require eminent domain as west of 3rd is not public Right-of-Way. Drahota answered that it probably would, though all alternatives will require some level of property acquisition, during construction at a minimum.

A member asked if there had been any consideration to remove the Couch couplet, to which Drahota responded there were no plans to remove it. Another member asked whether the County was using Climate Action Plan and Vision Zero goals for project analysis, which Drahota confirmed it was. Drahota noted that construction will be designed to handle future streetcar construction, but it was still to be determined whether tracks would be put in as part of the project.

Drahota noted that with the Couch option a 5% grade would extend approximately 500-600 feet, and that a coupled bridge, as per Alternative 4, would likely be the most time-consuming and expensive option. The retrofit, by comparison, would likely be the least-cost option. A retrofit would be 86' wide, where a replacement would be over 100' wide.

BAC members questioned why travel lanes were widened from 10' to 11' in the diagram, as well as why there was only one bus lane. Members added that they would prefer 2 bus lanes and 2 car lanes as well as more room for pedestrians and bicyclists that includes barriers to separate them from motor vehicle traffic. Drahota noted that it is still relatively early into the project, and dimensions are still negotiable; nothing has been approved or finalized.

A BAC member asked about the ability to repair the dated lift equipment on the bridge, should it break in a significant way. Drahota answered that the current old equipment would likely be completely destroyed in an earthquake, which is why it would be rebuilt to prevent that scenario.

A BAC member commented that bus lanes in 2 directions should be a prerequisite for the project and asked whether the project managers had studied reversible lanes for the project. Drahota answered that they had not yet been studied but certainly could be. Another member asked whether a second travel lane would even be necessary as they had never noticed any backup westbound with the current single-lane configuration due to construction, with the additional effect of slowing down cars on the bridge. Project managers responded that they are in the early stages of diving into traffic analysis and will study what happens if the bridge were to go to 1 general purpose lane in each direction. A member asked whether this analysis would be based just on driving time, or on travel time for all modes. Drahota confirmed it would include all modes. Another member commented that they would want to see a protected bike lane as a baseline for the bridge as a pedestrian was killed years ago when a car entered the sidewalk.

Drahota mentioned the two available options for traffic during construction: a temporary movable bridge or a full bridge closure. A BAC member added that in the event a temporary bridge is constructed, they would encourage it to be bike-, pedestrian-, and transit-only. The timelines for construction would be 3.5 years for a retrofit and 4.5 for a replacement, shifting to 5 and 6 years respectively if a temporary bridge were to be constructed.

Project managers moved into discussing evaluation criteria for the proposed alternatives. BAC members commented that Multnomah County should be evaluating freight, emergency vehicles, and motor vehicles differently, as they were presented in the

same category. A member called for single-occupancy vehicles to be an independent category for evaluation, and that leaving it as-is contributes to a pro-SOV bias.

Drahota noted that Multnomah County would come back a few more times for more feedback and refinements to designs. For additional public feedback, the County solicited input from the community task force, an online open house, tabling, and social media, among others. An online open house and survey are running from September 3rd to October 4th.

A BAC member commented that they would like to see a car-light alternative presented to the public, to inform Portlanders how much would be spent on making room for cars. Another member suggested a public survey that would allow users to budget out certain elements of the potential project. Drahota noted he would like specific information on how best to conduct that type of evaluation.

II. Portland Bicycle Plan for 2030: Draft Report to Council

Roger Geller, PBOT bicycle coordinator, presented on the update the 2030 Bicycle Plan. This update is the belated 5-year report required by the Resolution that adopted the plan in 2010.

The plan identified 223 action items, of which 59 are complete, 88 are ongoing (they are action items that cannot be “completed”), 35 have current efforts being made to complete, 20 items had progress made but no current efforts to complete and 21 have not yet been addressed. Geller explained the 3 key action item categories advanced by the plan: a strong policy framework, a dense and cohesive bikeway network, and encouragement and education. One of the action items involved collaborating with City bureaus and Metro to work toward adopting a Green Transportation Hierarchy, and another involved updating the bicycle parking code to ensure all land uses provide ample bike parking and end-of-trip facilities.

A BAC member asked whether it would be helpful to provide a letter and/or testimony. Geller answered that it would be helpful when the update goes to City Council, for which there is no current date. Another member asked Geller if he was pleased with how the bike plan has turned out to date. He answered that he generally was, and that even though not everything PBOT wanted was achieved, it was a good step in meeting bike goals, including a greatly-expanded bike network since 2009.

A member asked where Portland should be at in 2030; Geller responded that there was no numerical miles goal for 2030, but rather 3 tiers of development: immediate work, the 80% implementation network (a network to ensure a bike lane within ¼ mile of 80% of Portlanders), and the world-class network. To date, PBOT has completed about 58% of immediate work and the 80% implementation network as well as 28% of the world-class network. The City is on track for the first 2 development tiers but not quite on track for the world-class network.

Another BAC member shared a recent news story: the Seattle City Council passed legislation requiring SDOT to come before the Council if they plan more than \$1M on a project and do not adhere to the Bike Master Plan guidelines. The member suggested that as long as the City of Portland is spending money on paving projects, it should be a forced conversation if those projects are not accomplishing what is included in the bike master plan.

Other members noted wanting to include a count of protected intersections as well as a clearer definition of what constitutes a “low-stress” portion of the bike network, perhaps one that better accounts for rider comfort on a given route.

Geller discussed next steps for the 2030 Bicycle Plan. There is a long way to go to reach mode split goals, and to do so, PBOT is working on better design guidance as well as developing a neighborhood greenway assessment. PBOT is also working on funding and process improvements as well as increased opportunities for encouragement.

The committee reviewed challenges to meeting Bicycle Plan goals, including a lack of City staff available to deliver projects and a lack of political and community support for bikeway projects. A member noted that there has been large turnout to create new parking districts and does not think public input is being measured well, overvaluing loud voices at public events. Committee members voiced support for better forms of engagement, including mail and web. Geller shared an anecdote of bicycle improvements on a major city street in Odense, Denmark that the public voted down multiple times. However, the city government hosted a permanent open house on the street for more than a year, after which the public voted in favor of the improvements, illustrating the role of effective public engagement in garnering support.

A BAC member commented that framing things as opportunities rather than challenges could be an improvement. Another member asked about the adoption of the Protected Bike Lane Design Guide, which Geller noted was still happening this fall. A member asked how much had been spent on bicycle improvements, given the estimated cost of \$600M. Geller answered that it is not always clear as most projects are multi-modal.

Geller asked the committee what message Council should hear. BAC members agreed to send in ideas and feedback. Members noted that they would like to see the incentives and disincentives PBOT has control over used more appropriately, including pricing tools and on-street parking. They expressed that bicyclists must put in a great deal of legwork to advocate for bicycling improvements and that the default position is pro-single-occupancy-vehicle, adding that pro-car bias could be listed as a challenge for the 2030 Bicycle Plan.

III. Committee Business

David Stein, BAC vice chair, will be testifying to Council for Southwest in Motion. BAC members agreed to send their thoughts to Stein.

Meeting Adjourned.