

City of Portland Design Commission Briefing Cover Memo

Project: Earthquake Ready Burnside Bridge NEPA

Date: Thursday, December 03, 2020

To: Megan Neill, Multnomah County – Project Manager

From: Heather Catron, HDR – Project Manager

At the prior Design Commission briefing on July 14, 2020, the team shared information about the Earthquake Ready Burnside Bridge project's recommended preferred alternative, draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) analysis, and upcoming bridge type selection phase. As you may recall, Portland's aging downtown bridges are not expected to withstand a major earthquake. Since 2016, Multnomah County has been working to create an Earthquake Ready Burnside Bridge. This project addresses important City and regional goals for seismic resiliency, emergency response, and regional recovery and rebuilding.

The project is now in the environmental review and bridge Type Selection phase. The DEIS will include the Replacement Long-span Bridge as the recommended preferred alternative. This alternative would replace the existing Burnside Bridge with a new movable bridge in the same location and approximately the same length as the existing bridge. Due to its longer spans, it will have structural members above the roadway surface, resulting in fewer columns below the bridge compared to the existing bridge. It is recommended because it has the fewest columns in unstable soil, has more space under the bridge in Waterfront Park, more space for bicyclists and pedestrians, fewest impacts to natural resources, the least impact to the Burnside Skatepark, and is the least expensive. While the Replacement Long-span alternative is identified as the Preferred Alternative, the DEIS also evaluates other alternatives including: two other types of replacement bridges, an enhanced seismic retrofit of the existing bridge, and the no-build alternative. The DEIS will be published in January 2021, and a 45-day comment period for the DEIS will begin at that time.

In addition to the environmental review process, an amendment to include the preferred alternative in the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) is a necessary step. That amendment process will commence after the DEIS comment period concludes. One of the initial steps in the RTP amendment process is the approval of the preferred alternative by the Portland City Council. The goal of the upcoming December 7th Historic Landmark Commission briefing is to share information about the preferred alternative, and obtain the Commission's input prior to requesting the City Council's support for including the preferred alternative in the RTP.



Earthquake Ready Burnside Bridge

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The project team will also share a preview of possible long span bridge types. There are different long span bridge types that could be used (cable stayed, tied arch and through truss) and also different movable span types (vertical lift and bascule). An important next step in the process is to select the type of long span bridge to build.

The project team would like to meet with the Commission again in January or February 2021 to provide a briefing on the Draft EIS and also for a DAR on the bridge types being considered and evaluation criteria to help the Community Task Force (CTF) in their recommendation of a preferred bridge type. The project team would then like to provide a briefing in May 2021 on the recommended bridge type.