



City of Portland, Oregon
Bureau of Development Services
Land Use Services
FROM CONCEPT TO CONSTRUCTION

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Briefing

SUMMARY MEMO

Date: January 4, 2021
To: Patrick Sweeney, PBOT
Megan Neill, Multnomah County
From: Hillary Adam, Design / Historic Review Team
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Re: Earthquake Ready Burnside Bridge – Preferred Alternative Update
Briefing – December 7, 2020

Below is the summary of comments from the December 7, 2020 Briefing with the Historic Landmarks Commission. The discussion presented the Preferred Alternative (Long Span) and why it is being forwarded as the preferred alternative and briefly touched on the different options that are under consideration for that preferred alternative, which will be discussed in greater depth in the near future.

Questions Asked:

- Chair Minor asked if the Section 106 Consultation has already commenced and asked if the January DEIS Briefing would include both Section 106 and 4(f) information.
- Commissioner Mahoney asked for clarification on the difference between “effects” and “adverse effects” and how those determinations are made.
- Commissioner Roman asked how the choice of the bridge design will be made.
- Commissioner Foty asked if potential mitigation options have begun with SHPO.

Comments Provided:

- Commissioner Roman noted that the bridge is the cardinal axis of the city and is on axis with view corridors such as from Pittock Mansion, noting a desire that the look of the bridge from various viewpoints will be considered.
- Commissioner Foty suggested that consideration of URMs near the bridge could be part of the mitigation discussions because there are a lot of opportunities for seismic upgrade but the local process for identifying incentives for seismic upgrades has stalled.
- Commissioner Foty suggested that if Burnside is to be the primary Emergency Corridor after a seismic event and the adjacent buildings collapse on top of the route, that could cause serious problems, thus reinforcing the idea of seismically upgrading adjacent URM buildings as part of the mitigation strategy for loss of the bridge.
- Commissioner Foty argued that FEMA offers money for cleanup, but seismic reinforcement as mitigation would be a preventative measure, rather than a reactionary one.
- Commissioner Mahoney noted that the bridge has been an important locale for recent events (protests) and that any mitigation should consider the full history of the bridge including more recent history. She noted the bridge’s connection to important cultural events in the city such as the Rose Parade.

- Commissioner Minor noted that the bridge's impact on the Skidmore Old Town Historic District has resulted in a history that is readable on the buildings in that area. She noted that the National Historic Landmark (the district) and the bridge's relationship with that Landmark is the most important consideration, despite other potential impacts to other potential or existing historic resources.
- Commissioner Foty said that in formulating mitigation strategies, she would like to have a better understanding of the character-defining features of the bridge – why was it designed the way it was? Why the castle-like turrets? What was the intent of these design decisions? How did it impact the west side of the city? Commissioner Foty noted that the future bridge should carry forward some of the key design characteristics forward.
- Commissioner Roman noted one of the best qualities of the existing bridge is that it does not include a giant structure above the grade which enables views all around and into the historic district which is relatively unique among Portland bridge. He noted there is tension between the experience below the bridge and above the bridge with regard to where the supporting structure is located.
- Commissioner Roman noted that approval of an anticipated future bridge is one of the most important decisions the Landmarks Commission will make as the bridge is located in the center of the city, the heart of everything, separating north and south and east and west. He stated that if it's going to be a new bridge, it has to be an even better bridge than it is now – a bridge that could potentially gain historic designation in the future. He noted that a high quality bridge is critical to represent the City at this time, the way the current bridge represents those who built it.
- Commissioner Roman noted general concerns with the height of the deck relative to the existing structure, concerns over potential damage to adjacent buildings, and the visual impacts both crossing the bridge and viewing it from a distance.
- Commissioner Fuenmayor appreciated the intent of having a safer city but noted concerns about how the potential loss of the bridge and its replacement with a new bridge could impact the overall experience of passing through the City.
- Commissioner Fuenmayor stated that she believed that a new bridge, which will have a distinctly different character than the existing bridge, will have a noticeable effect on the historic buildings in the district and historic buildings on the east side but that these are as-yet unknowns.
- Commissioner Smith noted that since the project team last appeared before the Commission he had let it sink in that this historic bridge would be replaced, however following John Czarnecki's comments, he's now considering whether that's absolutely necessary or in the best interest of the City. He noted that the context is very different on the west and the east and it may be appropriate that the response is different on each side while still being unified. He noted that while public safety may be of paramount importance, this is a really important structure in the City.
- Commissioner Minor noted that the idea that the bridge might not have a symmetrical response with regard to the structure on either side but could still be cohesive is an interesting design challenge.

Public comments were received both orally and in writing from John Czarnecki. These comments were in support of the Enhanced Seismic Retrofit option and highlighted the bridge's position in the city and its connection to other historic spaces and places, generally along Burnside. These comments were forwarded to the project team. Commissioners appreciated and referenced these comments in some of their comments.

Files related to this Briefing can be found here: <https://efiles.portlandoregon.gov/record/14016393>.

Please contact me with any questions.

