



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

Carmen Rubio, Commissioner
Rebecca Esau, Director
Phone: (503) 823-7300
TTY: 711
www.portland.gov/bds

Portland Design Commission & Historic Landmarks Commission Briefing

DISCUSSION MEMO

Date: October 16, 2023

To: Portland Design Commission
Portland Historic Landmarks Commission

From: Tim Heron, Design & Historic Review Team
503-823-7726 | tim.heron@portlandoregon.gov

Re: Briefing – Interstate Bridge Replacement Project Update
October 19, 2023

This memo is regarding the upcoming Briefing on October 19, 2023, regarding the Interstate Bridge Replacement Project [IBRP]. The following supporting documents are available as follows:

- Cover letter and Draft PowerPoint Presentation by the IBRP Team – attached
- [Link to Interstate Bridge Replacement Project website](#)
- June 30, 2022 Design Commission IBRP letter to Portland City Council – attached
- May 6, 2011 Design Commission Letter to Oregon Governor John Kitzhaber and Washington Governor Christine Gregoire – attached

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The Interstate Bridge Replacement Project is an interstate effort, led by the Oregon and Washington Departments of Transportation, to develop a plan for a new seismically resilient multi-modal bridge across the Columbia River to provide improved mobility for people, goods, and services. A new bridge would replace the existing bridge(s), the northbound of which is a National Register-listed Historic Landmark.

REVIEW PROCESS

No formal review process by the Design Commission or the Landmarks Commission will be required for the replacement bridge.

However, as discussed in the recent [October 9, 2023, Landmarks Commission Briefing](#), one of the identified adverse effects is the proposed demolition of the northbound bridge, which is listed on the National Register. Demolition of the Oregon portion of this bridge will require a Type 4 Demolition Review, to be reviewed by Portland City Council, following a public advisory meeting with the Historic

Landmarks Commission. The official recommendation to approve or deny the request will be made by the Bureau of Development Services, however, the Landmarks Commission may provide oral or written testimony to City Council. The Landmarks Commission meeting is part of the public record for the hearing at City Council.

STAFF COMMENTS

While the demolition of the historic bridge has not been reviewed through the required Demolition Review process, replacement of this bridge has long been considered a likelihood and, in 2022, Portland City Council adopted [Resolution #37581](#) endorsing the proposed replacement alternative.

Adverse effects, and particularly demolition of a historic resource, invite the opportunity for mitigation as required by the Demolition Review Approval Criteria. Mitigation can and should include focus on the replacement bridge to be of high-quality design and inspiration worthy of the mighty Columbia River and as a Pacific Northwest gateway between the states of Oregon and Washington.

As stated in the June 30, 2022 letter from the Portland Design Commission to Portland City Council [attached] and excerpt below:

The location of the interstate bridge on the mighty Columbia River, its role as a gateway to states of Oregon and Washington and the scenic Columbia River Gorge, and its magnificent natural setting DEMANDS that design of the replacement bridge and its connections to the land on both banks of the River are carried out at the highest level of excellence and that it will sensitively integrate with its surroundings in terms of urban design, land use planning and environmental considerations. Furthermore, a well-designed and aesthetically pleasing bridge, and its various off and on ramps, is critical to the health and vibrancy of future development on Hayden Island, the Marine Drive area, and downtown Vancouver, with enormous long-term potentials for economic development for both Vancouver and Portland.

Therefore, we are writing this letter to urge Portland City Council, before approving the MLPA, to require that the project include a BI-STATE Design Oversight Committee with authority to make recommendations to the Executive Steering Committee as the project moves forward.

This Design Oversight Committee should be composed of engineers, architects, landscape architects, urban designers and artists who have deep experience with projects of this scale, complexity and level of community input process, selected from both States. Also, we strongly recommend that one member from both the Design Commission and Historic Landmarks Commissions for Portland be added to this committee as they bring a comprehensive level of design, as well as a thorough understanding of the long-range plans for growth and development in the corridor.