

# City of Portland Historic Landmarks Commission / Design Commission Joint Briefing

---

**Project:** Earthquake Ready Burnside Bridge

---

**Date:** Wednesday, May 22, 2024

---

**To:** City of Portland Historic Landmarks Commission and Design Commission

---

**From:** Megan Neill, Multnomah County – Project Manager

---

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.

As some of you may recall, in 2020/21 during the environmental review phase of the project, the team shared information and sought input at briefings and a joint Design Advice Request. The Replacement Long Span Bridge is the preferred bridge alternative. This alternative would replace the existing Burnside Bridge with a new movable bridge in the same location and length as the existing bridge with support structure above the roadway surface resulting in fewer columns below. It was selected 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 was selected as the Preferred Alternative, the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) also evaluates other alternatives including: two other types of replacement bridges, an enhanced seismic retrofit of the existing bridge, and the no-build alternative. A copy of the final EIS is available online at: [Combined Final Environmental Impact Statement / Record of Decision](#)

The project is now in the design phase and beginning the land use review process with the City of Portland. At this upcoming joint briefing, the team would like to update the Commissions on the project schedule / next steps and the design decisions to date. A bascule lift type has been selected and on the west side the bridge will be constructed using girders. Similar to the current bridge, this form does not have any structure supporting the bridge from above. Thus, it will ensure views of downtown from the east remain unobstructed. This is consistent with the direction we heard from the Commissions in our earlier series of meetings in 2020/21.

For the east side of the bridge, there are several bridge type design options under consideration. The project will be launching a public engagement process in July to get feedback on these options and would like to share a preview with the Commissions.

Our goal is to be back in late summer to share what we've learned from the public engagement process and delve into greater detail about the upcoming land use review processes.