

Oak Grove-Lake Oswego Pedestrian/Bicycle Bridge Feasibility Study

Policy Committee (PC) Meeting Summary

January 28, 2020, 6 p.m. – 8 p.m.

Clackamas County Development Services Building

Meeting Objective

- To take action on draft final Oak Grove-Lake Oswego Pedestrian/Bicycle Bridge Feasibility Study report
- To recommend next steps to participating local governments and Metro

Attendees

*PC Members: Mark Gamba, Mayor of Milwaukie; Christine Lewis, Metro Councilor; Paul Savas, Clackamas County Commissioner.

* Note - Lake Oswego City Councilor Jackie Manz was not present following a motion made by Lake Oswego City Council on November 5 stating: *"Lake Oswego will no longer appoint a Council or staff liaison for the OGLO advisory committee"*

Project Staff: Clackamas County: Steve Williams (project manager), Karen Buehrig (meeting facilitator), Brett Setterfield

Visitors: Ed Riddle; Michael Hoeye; Anatta Blackmarr; Bob Earus; Pete Ihrig; Kate Firmin; Elaine Franklin; Robert Rose; Ben Rousseau; Bruce Parker; Richard Fiala; Fred Sawyer; Molly Little; Lisa Nowak; John LaMotte; Kelly Perlewitz; Christine Lewis; Don McHarness; Gerald Fox; Chips Janger; Tobias Eld; Mike Pyshka; Jeff Gudman; Helen Leek

6:00 p.m. Welcome, Meeting Purpose and Agenda Review

Karen introduced everyone at the table, gave a quick overview of the meeting agenda, and reviewed the project purpose. She stated that this will be the last meeting for this project, with potential 'next steps' to be decided by the committee at the end of the meeting. She then discussed the request from the last Policy Committee meeting to have project staff provide more information to Lake Oswego and the city council's action a few days later to declare the project to be unfeasible and stating that the city would no longer have a member of their City Council on the Policy Committee.

Mayor Gamba asked if staff was able to provide a presentation before the Lake Oswego City Council motion. Karen said staff did provide a five-minute presentation beforehand.

Commissioner Savas said he thought that the large positive feedback received at the beginning of this project began to shift negative as the project moved forward.

6:05 p.m. Public Comment

Ed Riddle – Lives up on Fair Oaks Ave close to where the bridge would land. There has been a lot of negative feedback about this project for good reason. It would hurt parks on each side of the river, neighbors would have to deal with years of noisy construction, pollution related to that and how it would affect the climate crisis. I want a better solution, and believe a ferry/shuttle service would be

better, operationally quiet, resilient, build out last-mile connections, and ferries are charming and emotionally appealing.

Anatta Blackmarr - We need a kinder, gentler alternative. The operator of Frog Ferry said that a ferry would be much more appealing, with places like Seattle and San Francisco launching services. The goal is to provide sustainable service to connect communities and people to their service.

Fred Sawyer – We need a better option for the bridge -- C Avenue to Courtney Ave. This would not affect driveways or sewer lines. The Terwilliger alignment is also a possible more preferable option. The options that land in the park aren't good because they go up and down hundreds of feet, making it difficult to maneuver.

Lisa Nowak – In the last meeting, people said this bridge would help reduce greenhouse gas emissions, but that isn't the case because the benefits would be offset by all the concrete poured for the bridge. This would also be the longest bridge in Portland. It wouldn't increase bike commuting because people who bike, already bike because Portland has a good bike infrastructure. There wouldn't be a significant difference in traffic on McLoughlin, the Sellwood Bridge or Highway 43. Most people don't bike in the winter, yet we don't see a noticeable difference in traffic between winter and summer, and it's less likely we'd see one due to a new bridge.

Kelly Perlewitz – Lives in Lake Oswego. Not a fan of this bridge. I have an issue with the report stating this project is technically feasible because if it means places for a landing, that is incorrect. Don't follow through with Option 1 and instead use our taxes in a more efficient way that would benefit more of the community.

Gerald Fox – We're in an era of traffic congestion and climate change, as seen by the fiasco going on in the Lloyd District. The bridge would benefit the region, but we need to find a way to make this project the most productive. People who currently bike are either fit or use electric assist, so focusing on that would be essential. The MAX line was looked at as a bad idea that no one would ride, but has since turned into a service that carries a large amount of daily commuters.

Tobias Eld – Homeowner and business owner living in Oak Grove. I bike downtown to Portland for work. This bridge would make both communities better. Take a look at the opponents of the project. When the Orange Line was being proposed there was adamant opposition of people fearing the worst, but he, nor his neighbors, have seen any of those come to fruition. Continue with this project.

Robert Rose – Resident of Lake Oswego. I commuted to downtown Portland for years and there is no safe way to bike from Lake Oswego to Portland. The vote in Lake Oswego was not unanimous. Keep the project going.

Ben Rousseau – Resident of Milwaukee; served on Community Advisory Committee. Keep looking into this project. It has many positive applications, such as reaching a lower carbon footprint that we'll not be able to reach without it. There are benefits to equity and employment that you just don't have with people being forced to drive the long routes around for work. The objections I've been hearing have all been fears, similar to that of the Orange Line. I want a decision to be made not by a fear of what might come.

Helen Leek – Lake Oswego resident; glad that the City Council voted to get out of this project. I don't understand why planners would want to land this bridge in a park that has nice, complete infrastructure.

I was happy with the person who stood up to the planners at the City Council meeting telling them the lack of benefit of this project. I have biked across several countries, but don't think this project would benefit employment areas on both sides of the river.

6:35 p.m. Presentation of Oak Grove-Lake Oswego Pedestrian/Bicycle Bridge Feasibility Study Report

Project Manager Steve Williams reviewed the details of the study, the study area (railroad bridge to Oak Grove Blvd) and the feasibility study process, which was to:

1. Identify possible bridge alignments;
2. Identify benefits and challenges for each alignment;
3. Engage public to select three preferred alignments;
4. Estimate costs;
5. Determine the permitting and review requirements;
6. Engage public to identify opportunities and challenges and select best alternatives;
7. Engage public to identify opportunities and challenges and select best alternatives;
8. Recommend next steps.

He reviewed the two alignments the Policy Committee selected based on public input (Terwilliger Blvd to Courtney Ave and Foothills Park to Courtney Ave); gave an overview of community engagement and involvement. He noted that a scientific random sample phone survey of 400 people on both sides of the river in September 2019 showed that 71% of people supported the project on the east side of the river and 55% supported it on the west side. He provided an overview of the Feasibility Study findings and offered staff and Technical Advisory Committee recommendations to the Policy Committee: 1. Accept the final feasibility study report and determine that the bridge is feasible; 2. Give direction to staff on next steps.

6:55 p.m. Discussion and Action of Final Study Report

Karen asked the Policy Committee members if they had any questions about the presentation. Commissioner Savas asked that, with the landing spots showing a limit for bus options, doesn't that show that the bridge is not feasible? Steve responded that enhancements to the landing points would be necessary. Savas said the support which was significant at the beginning of the project has grown to significant opposition with landings on Courtney Ave rather than alongside the train trestle bridge. He proposed the following language changes to the Feasibility Study report:

Page 4, A "the proposed alternatives, the two studied on the west and the one on the east, are not feasible at this time, but they are technically feasible".

Page 5, E -- "Two bridge alignments were found technically feasible"

Page 5, G – Insert the term "technically" before feasible

Under K – Because we have not reached consensus on who would maintain the bridge, K can stand as it is, but it can just be drawn out.

Page 4, 5th paragraph – Add, "However, as the process wrapped, there's no new data to inform the Policy Committee with a scientific public poll regarding the current level of support."

Commissioner Savas made a motion to approve the feasibility study with the proposed amendments, Councilor Lewis seconded, and the Policy Committee approved the motion unanimously.

7:30 p.m. Presentation of Options for Next Steps

Steve provided four options for next steps:

- Option #1: Engineering/Environmental Assessment of alternatives
- Option #2: Undertake a study of additional bridge location north and south of Lake Oswego
- Option #3: Undertake a study of boat/ferry/water taxi crossing of Willamette River between Sellwood Bridge and Oregon City
- Option #4: Accept the completed feasibility study and determine that the bridge is technically feasible but not supported by the communities at this time.

Staff and the Technical Advisory Committee recommend that the Policy Committee move forward with Option #2, or move forward with both Option #2 and Option #3.

7:35 p.m. Discussion and Recommendations on Next Steps

Councilor Lewis -- option 2 is moving in the right direction; we'll need to move forward with a needs analysis.

Mayor Gamba -- option 2 is a good idea, but landing only on public land was a barrier. If this project is to move forward, need to also look at the potential for landing on private land.

Councilor Lewis agreed.

Mayor Gamba -- This project was the most popular project in the County's TSP, and I'd like to see it move forward.

Commissioner Savas – provided the Policy Committee with language of an Option #5, with input from the Board of County Commissioners, combining options 2 and 4:

- a) Given the political realities with the recent withdrawal of the City of Lake Oswego from the process and that the current landing point are not supported by the communities at this time instruct staff to take no further action on the proposed alignments.
- b) Undertake a study of a pedestrian/bicycle crossing of the Willamette River at other locations north and south of the City of Lake Oswego consistent with the adopted Clackamas County TSP Project #2022 which identifies the project area for the bridge as being "Sellwood to Oregon City." If this action were selected, Metro would need to be consulted in regard to the funding set aside for further study.

Commissioner Savas made a motion to the Policy Committee to accept proposed option 5, with the inclusion of the language, "landing options on private property should be considered." Councilor Lewis seconded the motion, and the motion passed unanimously.

Commissioner Savas discussed the water taxi option.

Mayor Gamba said the Frog Ferry from Milwaukie to Lake Oswego is in discussion, and so it would be another ferry on top of that. The docks at Milwaukie and Lake Oswego would need to be improved, and if it's just one ferry with half-hour headway, it wouldn't be an efficient commuter ferry.

Councilor Lewis – I'm fighting for last-mile shuttles and wouldn't be able to work alongside the bridge alternatives, as it's too big of a scope. The most useful next step would be to undertake a study with a needs assessment for a bicycle/pedestrian crossing. The committee then discussed the ferries more, and considered switching the wording from 'bridge' to 'crossing.'

Steve asked that you're not anticipating vehicles in the options being discussed, and Mayor Gamba said emergency vehicles. Steve said he was looking in terms of the ferry, there's a big difference between adding cars alongside bikes and pedestrians. Mayor Gamba said there is already a study underway to look at a ferry between Milwaukie and Lake Oswego, the Frog Ferry, and an additional study would be redundant. He said it will study all the things we need to know, except for headway, which would be an easy thing to look into following that study. Savas said this would look at other potential landing spots, and he wants to make sure the Policy Committee looks at all options as this project ends with this meeting. Lewis said a "Needs Assessment" would make the most sense moving forward and Mayor Gamba agreed.

Karen asked if the committee had any recommendations for County Staff regarding the T2020 Tier 2 option for this potential bridge. Councilor Lewis said this project may not fit this funding, and future funding should be available.

Commissioner Lewis made a motion to recommend that Clackamas representatives on the T2020 task force drop this Tier 2 corridor from consideration. Mayor Gamba said he will not support pulling it from consideration as he feels there is significant support. Lewis and Savas approved the motion, Gamba opposed, meaning there was no consensus and the motion did not pass.

8:01 p.m. Adjourn