

Nov. 17, 2024



Intertwine Alliance Comments on Draft SEIS for Interstate Bridge

SUMMARY

The Intertwine Alliance requests that you please consider the following points to ensure the new bridge be a good experience for those walking, biking and rolling and those using public transportation. It is critical that we get this right for our communities. We also need the new bridge to improve, or at least not detract from, connectivity with regional trails in its vicinity. Finally, there needs to be a closer look at environmental and climate impacts.

The Intertwine Alliance is a bi-state regional coalition of 80 public, private and nonprofit partners advocating for investments in parks, trails, greenspace and equitable access to nature. We do this work in alignment with advocates in transportation justice and affordable housing.

We are primarily concerned with bridge design impacts on the safety, connectivity, accessibility, and user experience of people walking, biking, using mobility devices, and accessing transit. We are especially concerned about the bridge's impact on folks accessing existing and planned segments of the Marine Drive Path, Delta Park, Columbia Slough Path, and North Portland Greenway on the south side of the bridge and the Vancouver Waterfront Trail and the Burnt Bridge Creek Trail on the north side.

We strongly encourage more study of design options that put transit and active transportation facilities together for increased access, safety, comfort, emergency response, and user options.

Trail Access and Experience for People Walking, Biking, Rolling

If we are to meet safety and active transportation usership goals, clear, safe connections and wayfinding to the existing and planned regional trails network on both sides of the river is critical.

The bridge project corridor should extend to the north to Hwy 500 and Leverich Park to provide active transportation connectivity from the Burnt River Creek Trail and neighborhoods north of Hwy 500, as well as a direct connection to the Vancouver Waterfront Path.

On the south side, the project corridor should include safe, separated connections to planned segments of the Marine Drive Path (connecting to the North Portland Greenway), Delta Park, and the Columbia Slough Path.

When approaching the bridge from the north, the "Vancouver Dip" is a barrier for universal access. Under the current design, people must descend to the waterfront then use a half-mile-



long, 4.5% grade circular facility to climb up to the bridge before crossing the Columbia River. This is an extreme example of out-of-direction travel that is exacerbated by out-of-elevation travel. The program needs to include a multi-use path at the bridge's grade from Evergreen to the riverfront so that walkers/rollers/riders have direct access to the bridge.

A related and significant problem is the elevation barrier into the multiuse path, especially at the Vancouver waterfront. Under current design, in order to access the multiuse bridge path, users must climb/descend a half-mile circular ramp at 4.5% grade. **This is a significant barrier and is ableist in design.** If the elevation of the multiuse path crossing the Columbia River cannot be lowered, then elevators need to be made available for active transportation users.

There should be robust and consistent wayfinding signage and pavement markings to connect folks to trails, active transportation facilities, and transit stops on both sides of the bridge.

The active transportation and transit facilities are on opposite sides of the bridge. As a result, there is additional out-of-direction travel for people making trips that combine transit and walking/rolling/biking.

Safety, Comfort, and Equitable Access

If we are to meet or exceed active transportation usership goals, the system must be designed to be welcoming of those who are 8 to 80 years old—by ensuring seamless, accessible pathways without extra distance or difficult grades. By integrating open views, rest areas, and close transit access, the bridge can become a safe, enjoyable route for all.

Noise, dirt, and debris: Active transportation users need protection from road noise, dirt and vehicle debris.

Grade and Distance: Current designs require significant out-of-direction travel both in terms of distance and grade for active transportation users, while single occupancy vehicle travel experiences little to no out-of-direction travel.

Due to the long span of the bridge, without the benefit of tree canopy, there should be provisions for shading the multi-use path as the number of days regional heat advisories continue to increase.

Open views to appreciate nature: Positioning the active transportation facilities in a way to access views of nature can reduce stress and increase comfort, thus encouraging more users.

If a two-level bridge, there should be prevention of rain (and other liquid) running off onto the multi-use path.



Personal Safety: Bridge connections should adequately separate people walking, biking, and rolling from motor vehicles and the bridge, and approach pathways should include adequate lighting.

Emergency Access: Medical and police vehicles must be able to directly access the multi-use path. Lack of embedded rail ties prevent ambulances and emergency responders from directly supporting those using the multi-use path. If emergency responders are expected to access multi-use path by parking on the highway shoulder and scaling the divider, we are concerned there is not sufficient separation between automobiles traveling at highway speeds and active transportation modes.

Operations & Maintenance of Active Transportation System

Active transportation paths must have a long-term financial plan for clearing the right-of-way of debris, glass, trash, snow and ice, etc. The bridge maintenance and operations plan should include clearing active transportation routes and pathways on bridge and all along the approaches

Environmental and Climate Impact

We want a climate-resilient bridge that supports active and public transportation, reducing reliance on cars and cutting emissions long-term. An environmentally friendly design promotes cleaner, healthier spaces, with natural buffers and materials that help protect public health and the environment.

As heat increases in the region, the need for climate-resilience/mitigation is necessary. This includes protection from the sun through natural and/or manmade shade.

Reducing single-occupancy vehicle miles traveled will reduce air particulate pollution. Modeshift to transit and active transportation also: reduces noise pollution and reduces the impacts of water runoff, including chemical, oil, tire particulate and brake particulate runoff.

Global impacts: The proposed design does little to reduce auto travel, estimating a 62% increase in study-area VMT over current amounts (Executive Summary, S-21). Shifting modeshare to active transportation and transit is the most effective method of reducing VMT and meeting specific state/regional climate goals.

Thank you for considering all of these critical points. We must get this bridge right for our community and our climate.

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