

# Building Bridges: County forms technical advisory committee to study Sellwood Bridge options

By Lee Perlman  
The Southwest Portland Post

Multnomah County is no closer to paying for a new \$400 million Sellwood Bridge, but it will soon have a brand new committee to study it. County Commission Chairman Ted Wheeler announced at a hearing in March that he was forming a new committee to study the bridge.

The move infuriated Dorothy Gage, a representative of the Ashcreek Neighborhood Association and Southwest Neighborhoods, Inc. on a previous Project Advisory Committee, who inter-

preted Wheeler's comments as a desire to re-study her committee's work.

There was already friction between the citizen group and a Steering Committee, made up of representatives of participating jurisdictions and their senior staff; the PAC had accused the Steering Committee of rejecting their recommendations without explanation.

County staffer Michael Pullen later told *The Post* that the committee Wheeler envisioned would be composed of engineers and other technical experts "from places like Bend or Redmond, who don't have a stake in the outcome," to assess the safety of the existing bridge.

At one point Commissioner Maria Rojo de Steffey, concerned about the safety rating [2 out of a possible 100] of the existing span, had called for it to be shut to all traffic. Meanwhile, Pullen said, experts are assessing five proposals to rehabilitate the existing bridge or build a new one. They should have a recommendation available for public comment "sometime after Labor Day," he said.

The five options include two to rehabilitate the existing bridge, with

one choice to widen the two-lane span enough to add adequate bike and pedestrian facilities, and another to place these on a second bridge.

A third option calls for a new bridge at the location of the existing one, with two travel lanes in one direction and one in the other, plus a lower level for bikes and pedestrians. The fourth option has a new bridge two blocks to the north, with two lanes for private vehicles and two lanes for mass transit.

The fifth option would build a bridge immediately to the south of the existing one with two traffic lanes plus bike lanes and pedestrian walks. The fifth option would require housing removal, and all but the third option calling for a northern alignment would involve having no operating bridge at this location for three years. At press time there were no plans to raise the funds for the bridge.

## Willamette River MAX crossing will likely be Sherman-Porter alignment

Planners studying locations for a new light rail transit bridge over the

Willamette River are zeroing in on a proposed Sherman-Porter alignment.

Local jurisdictions had officially decided in 2003 on the location for the "Caruthers Street" bridge, which would carry a new light rail line from downtown Portland to Milwaukie as well as provide a crossing for a new streetcar route.

However, city and development interests called for reconsideration of this part of the route, seeking a station closer to the South Waterfront area, the Oregon Health and Sciences University's proposed new campus, and its aerial tram.

Planners have been studying four possible new alignments. It appears now that a route that would touch the east side at Southeast Sherman Street, and the west at Southwest Porter Street, is gaining favor with key stakeholder. It is the longest span currently under consideration at 9710 feet (the original Caruthers Street crossing, pursuing a more direct route, is 7951 feet), and the most expensive at \$34,300,000.

At a Portland Planning Commission meeting last month, Mark Williams of OHSU and Pat LaCross of the Oregon  
*(Continued on Page 3)*



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