

# Governing partners prepare Sellwood Bridge funding priorities

By Lee Perlman  
The Southwest Portland Post

Participating governments last month began zeroing in on a budget for a new Sellwood Bridge – as they would like it to be, and as it may have to be if they run short of funds.

As part of this venture, the project's Citizen Advisory Committee adopted a list of design features they would like to see added.

These include belvederes (towers that both add architectural character and stopping places for bicyclists and pedestrians) benches, pavement treatment to designate bike and pedestrian paths, fencing, structural lighting, and a Gateway Feature and artwork.

The total for all these comes to \$3.85 million. This in turn brings the existing funding shortfall for the \$269 million project as a whole to \$22.7 million.

Project manager Ian Cannon told the Project Stakeholders Committee (composed of representatives of the participating jurisdictions) that the best chance to gain the money is to secure a federal Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) grant.

Failing this, Cannon said, the project team is working on a list of



A photo simulation of a deck arch Sellwood Bridge replacement. (Photo courtesy of Multnomah County)

“downsized and deferred” items. Deferred items could be added later, but “downsized” ones would alter the bridge structure and, in all probability, would never be restored. None of the cuts would interfere with the project going forward as scheduled, Cannon said.

Virtually all of the proposed cost reduction measures presented called for alterations in the west end or approaches to the bridge. Even if they were all adopted, Cannon said, transportation would operate “somewhat better” than it does today.

In answer to a question from Mayor Sam Adams, Cannon said that cuts of \$8 million or less could be made in such a way as to allow their restoration later. Above \$8 million, Cannon said, “The interim plan becomes the plan.”

In discussions with the CAC, Cannon noted that the completed new span would be 2,000 feet long. Thus, he said, the stopping-off place the belvederes provide is not only an amenity for sightseers, but also a necessity for the elderly and infirm.

Bicycle and pedestrian advocates have argued that for the bridge to

operate properly, bike and pedestrian paths need to be clearly marked and differentiated. The CAC agreed on the need for a fence, but said it shouldn't be “penitentiary-like” in character.

The Multnomah County Commission is scheduled to vote on the proposal on October 6.

Alan Lehto, who represented Tri-Met at the PSC meeting, said, “We definitely support this. It makes sense to move forward and look at whatever resources we can find to not have this become a leftover project.”

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