

Water Bureau joins project as partner, retaining walls being discussed

CAPITOL HIGHWAY PROJECT

By Erik Vidstrand
The Southwest Portland Post

In early May, city of Portland transportation staff provided updates on the Capitol Highway improvement project to the Multnomah subcommittee. Steve Szigethy, project manager, and Cedar Heinle, project structural engineer, discussed anticipated components.

The city has removed street water facilities, or bioswales, from the plans. This allows more separation between pedestrians and bicyclists on the east side of the highway.

"Some on-street parking has been added and additional off-corridor improvements have been designed on 42nd Avenue, Alice Street, and Multnomah Boulevard," Szigethy said.

"Soil sampling took place along the corridor, a tree walk-through happened, and [we] initiated retaining-wall designs."

Chris Lyons, subcommittee chair, announced that the Portland Water Bureau is joining the project as a major partner.

"North of Southwest Marigold Street," Lyons said, "the water bureau plans not only to relocate the water main, but also to upgrade the pipe from six to eight inches. They will also replace the water main in Carson Street from 42nd Avenue to Capitol Highway."

"This would be a good time to let me know if you are thinking about updating or changing your sewer or water lines," Szigethy said.

Lyons said the city has completed one-on-one property owner visits.

"City staff was able to reach 45 out of 100 properties," Lyons said. "Remaining properties will receive direct outreach from PBOT's right-of-way staff as they develop construction easement documents."

Heinle presented options for project retaining walls. "There are mainly three types of walls," Heinle said. "These include gravity, cast-in-place, and sheet pile walls."

"Gravity walls are the very large blocks you see along Multnomah Boulevard," she said. "These are the least expensive, have a short construction time, and are good for low walls."

But Heinle said they these have the largest excavation footprint and have the potential for graffiti.

"Some can be coated with anti-graffiti paint; some will have railings or landscaping."

"Over time these walls can get grungy and weeds grow out of them," Lyons said.

"The city conducts wall maintenance and inspections every few years," Heinle said. "There are over 600 walls throughout the city with a staff of four."

"We're not the wall police, though," said Szigethy.

"Cast-in-place walls are medium cost," Heinle said. "They are made



A cast-in-place wall was the design that most residents along Capitol Highway liked. Railings are required where a fall hazard is present. Residents preferred railing that was painted black, which is designed to fade into the landscape. (Post photo by Erik Vidstrand)

of concrete, can feature carvings, and can be stained or painted. They have a smaller excavation footprint and have a more aesthetic look."

"Sheet pile walls are the most expensive," she said. "They are made of steel and have a rust look."

Heinle shared photos of steel beams driven into the ground. They are lightweight but strong and are good for moist soils.

"They may conflict with existing or future utilities," she said.

Most audience members preferred the cast-in-place design.

Committee members asked a variety of questions: Could murals be painted on the walls by high school students? Could neighbors chip in to help build the wall type they want? How tall are the largest walls?

"The tallest wall is about 10 feet in a few locations," Heinle said. "Some are five feet, and the smallest are two."

Szigethy said costs are aggregated into the budget so it would be difficult to portion out individual wall preferences.

"If you see any walls you like, though, please take a photo and send them to us," Szigethy said. "In the fall, there will be office hours for residents and recurring site visits."

The final topic was trees. Urban Forestry and other city tree partners surveyed 1,191 trees along the corridor and within 25 feet of the buffer area.

"It is our aspiration to keep as much of the canopy as possible," Szigethy said. "We looked at native and healthy trees, nuisance and unhealthy trees. About 885 trees will be preserved, 145 will be removed on Capitol, and 161 will be affected off the corridor."

"We are in process of informing all property owners about their losses," Szigethy said. "We plan to cut them in winter to avoid bird nesting. The US Fish and Wildlife Service will inspect all trees before they're removed."

According to Szigethy, federal law requires that private property owners be compensated for their tree losses.

The 60 percent design will be complete by July with final plans at the beginning of next year.

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