

December 16, 2020

The Honorable Jaime Herrera Beutler
Member of Congress
General O.O. Howard House
750 Anderson Street, Suite B
Vancouver, WA 98661

Dear Congresswoman Herrera Beutler:

In response to your recent letter, we would like to thank you for your continued advocacy for the Interstate Bridge Replacement (IBR) program. We are committed to comprehensive community engagement that incorporates lessons learned from previous efforts.

Comprehensive community and stakeholder engagement is critical to identifying a solution that both reflects the values of the community and earns broad regional, bi-state, and national support for that solution. The overall goal for the Community Advisory Group (CAG) is to provide input and feedback representing a diverse range of perspectives that is reflective of the community's needs, issues and concerns to influence program outcomes. We agree that honest and direct input from daily bi-state commuters is essential to informing the IBR program and that having this interest represented on the Community Advisory Group (CAG) is critical.

As part of our commitment to equity and inclusion, we implemented extensive outreach efforts with an emphasis on regular bridge users or those that might be affected by the program. A number of tools were used to get the word out about the opportunity to serve on either the CAG or the Equity Advisory Group (EAG) as broadly as possible on both sides of the river, including:

- Four public information sessions, with interpretation services available
- Direct mail postcards to 43,413 community members on both sides of the river
- Direct email messages with a recruitment flyer sent to over 300 organizations
- Social media posts including Facebook, Twitter and Nextdoor
- Coordination with partners to leverage these efforts, including shared social media posts and a City of Vancouver weekly update (900 neighborhood association leaders contacted)
- News release sent to ODOT and WSDOT public distribution lists, with targeted media outreach to publications serving multicultural communities
- Print ads in multiple publications: Flyers in The Columbian (19,269 printed copies), The Reflector (distribution of 18,870), The Skanner (45,000 readers), The Asian Reporter (20,000 printed copies), and El Latino De Hoy (90,000 readers)

- Digital ads in multiple publications, including The Columbian (100,000 impressions), Asian Reporter, El Latino De Hoy (Spanish), Latin Media NW (Spanish), and Viet NNN

While comprehensive outreach efforts are underway, we are committed to inclusive and broad engagement and appreciate your concern in ensuring that the recruitment process provides adequate time for community members to apply. With this in mind, we have **extended the application deadline to 5 p.m. on December 27th** to allow additional time for the application opportunity to reach interested community members. This timeframe will allow us to continue moving critical program development work forward to meet the legislative milestones and timelines committed to with federal partners.

As of today, we have received over 200 CAG applications. Of these applicants, more than a third indicated that they commuted across the bridge daily before the pandemic. Over half of the remaining applicants stated that they used the bridge at least 1-3 times per week. With this clear display of representation from regular bridge users, we are confident that we will have multiple representatives on the CAG that will be able to offer this critical commuter perspective. Many organizations representing various interests who will be members of the CAG also have leaders and members who commute across the bridge daily.

Your suggestion to have a focused avenue for addressing commuter perspectives is also much appreciated. To be able to incorporate this perspective, and other critical interests, we intend to form and launch focused topical ad-hoc working groups to inform the work of the CAG, including a bi-state bridge commuter working group. In addition to the commuter perspective being critical in overall program development work, the perspectives of communities of color, river users, freight, active transportation, and many other interests are also critical. Other possible working groups include ones specific to neighborhoods near the bridge, or active transportation users. These working groups will help provide an additional avenue for targeted conversations and feedback on specific interest areas. The details of how and when these working groups will be formed are still in development.

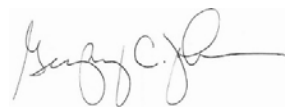
As a program, we will also continue our current approach to proactively reach out to our critics to better understand their concerns and perspectives. No idea ever got better because everyone agreed to it. Having one-on-one conversations with those that have blunt and honest feedback creates the opportunity for us to learn from the community, incorporate their feedback, respond to their concerns, and develop a better solution.

We appreciate your support and look forward to continued engagement with you and your staff as this critical infrastructure program moves forward.

Sincerely,



Roger Millar, P.E., FASCE, FAICP
WSDOT Secretary of Transportation



Greg Johnson, P.E.
IBR Program Administrator