



# Centering Equity

Large transportation infrastructure projects have historically harmed many low-income communities and communities of color. The Interstate Bridge Replacement program (IBR) is committed to centering equity in all aspects of work to not only avoid further harm to equity-priority communities, but also ensure they have a voice to help shape program work and realize economic and transportation benefits.

## Equity-priority communities for the IBR program include:

- ▶ Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC)
- ▶ People with disabilities
- ▶ Communities with limited English proficiency (LEP)
- ▶ Lower income and houseless individuals and families
- ▶ Immigrants and refugees
- ▶ Young people and older adults

*“Equity is the center of what we are advancing in the Interstate Bridge Replacement program. It is the way in which we are outreach and engaging with our diverse communities.”*

Johnell Bell, Principal Equity Officer



Ongoing, extensive, and inclusive public dialogue is critical to developing a bridge solution that best serves the complex needs of communities in Washington and Oregon. To support these goals, the program formed three advisory groups to provide feedback and recommendations: the Executive Steering Group, Equity Advisory Group, and Community Advisory Group.

## Equity Advisory Group

The Equity Advisory Group (EAG) makes recommendations to program leadership regarding processes, policies, and decisions that have the potential to affect equity-priority communities. Membership includes partner agency staff, community-based organization representatives, and community members from Oregon and Washington with diverse backgrounds, abilities, and perspectives.



*“The amount of effort that people are putting into thinking about equity and committing to acting with that in mind is a major milestone.”*

Dr. Roberta Hunte, EAG Facilitator

## EAG Milestones

- ▶ **Jan. 2021:** Group convenes with the purpose of ensuring the program remains centered on equity.
- ▶ **Apr. 2021:** Established an operable definition of equity for the program in terms of both process and outcomes.
- ▶ **Sept. 2021:** Delivered recommended equity-focused screening criteria to be used in evaluation of design options.
- ▶ **Oct. 2021:** Developed a draft Equity Framework, outlining the program’s approach to equity and the resources it will use to advance equity.

**Process Equity** is prioritizing access, influence, and decision-making power, for historically disenfranchised communities throughout the program, in establishing objectives, design, implementation, and evaluation of success.

**Outcome Equity** is the result of successful Process Equity and is demonstrated by tangible transportation and economic benefits for equity-priority communities.



## Equity-Centered Community Engagement

Beyond the EAG, the IBR program applies an equity lens for all community engagement activities. This means meeting people where they are, if not physically then virtually, and reducing barriers to participation.

### Examples of equity-centered community engagement practices include:

- ▶ Live closed captioning services in English and Spanish, and American Sign Language interpretation provided at public meeting and engagement events
- ▶ Multilingual event options with simultaneous translation
- ▶ Survey user testing with blind and low-vision communities
- ▶ Translation of materials into 8 languages; additional translation provided as requested

- ▶ ADA remediation of documents and presentations to ensure compatibility with screen reader software
- ▶ Listening session opportunities in affinity spaces on a variety of days and times
- ▶ Partnerships with community-based organizations serving equity-priority communities in Oregon and Washington
- ▶ Incentives for participation provided to equity-priority participants engaging with the program
- ▶ Production of 3-D physical models to assist blind and visually impaired community members

Through comprehensive and equitable community engagement, the IBR program pursues a solution that prioritizes safety, reflects community values, addresses community concerns, and fosters broad regional support.

## Community Partnerships

Partnerships with Oregon and Washington community-based organizations help the program reach equity-priority community members who have historically been excluded from the public input process on large infrastructure projects. These organizations have deep connections to local communities and existing strong relationships that allow the program to gather meaningful and targeted feedback.

In August 2021, a small-scale, low-barrier grant program was announced and applications solicited from community-based organizations who serve or represent equity-priority communities, have an office or members located in the region, have multiple modes of engagement with their members, have experience in community organizing, and are an incorporated nonprofit organization. Eleven organizations received grant funding for coordinating with the IBR program in outreach and engagement activities.

### Current community partners include:

- ▶ Activate Inclusion
- ▶ Washington Advocates of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing
- ▶ Partners in Career
- ▶ The Street Trust
- ▶ Next Up!
- ▶ Coalition of Communities of Color
- ▶ Brown Hope
- ▶ Somali American Council of Oregon
- ▶ Unite Oregon
- ▶ Slavic Community Center of NW
- ▶ NW Association of Blind Athletes

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- ▶ [www.interstatebridge.org](http://www.interstatebridge.org) to learn more, sign up for our e-newsletter, or submit a comment.

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For ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) or Civil Rights Title VI accommodations, translation/interpretation services, or more information call 503-731-4128, TTY 800-735-2900 or Oregon Relay Service 7-1-1.

#### WASHINGTON

Accommodation requests for people with disabilities in Washington can be made by contacting the WSDOT Diversity/ADA Affairs team at [wsdotada@wsdot.wa.gov](mailto:wsdotada@wsdot.wa.gov) or by calling toll-free, 855-362-4ADA (4232). Persons who are deaf or hard of hearing may make a request by calling the Washington State Relay at 711. Any person who believes his/her Title VI protection has been violated, may file a complaint with WSDOT's Office of Equal Opportunity (OEO) Title VI Coordinator by contacting (360) 705-7090.

# Community Engagement Milestones

## FEB 2021

Community survey completed by over **9,000 individuals** with over 14,000 comments submitted regarding transportation values and priorities.

## APR 2021 - AUG 2021

**Hosted 15 listening sessions** for specific user groups (active transportation, multimodal commuter, freight movement), potential impact concerns (downtown Vancouver, Hayden Island/Marine Drive, sustainability and climate), and equity-priority communities including sessions held in multiple languages. Over 300 community members participate.

## SEP 2021

**Established four community working groups** (Active Transportation, Multimodal Commuter, Downtown Vancouver, and Hayden Island/Marine Drive) to act as program focus groups with 81 participants representing a variety of ages, income levels, and identities across both sides of the Columbia River.

Awarded 11 community-based organizations small-scale, low-barrier grants to help bolster engagement efforts in partnership with the IBR program.

## NOV 2021 - JAN 2022

Community survey completed by over **9,600 individuals**, providing feedback on preferences and priorities associated with the user experience and attributes of design options. Extended survey deadline to allow for additional outreach to equity-priority communities, including refining survey and outreach materials to meet needs of people living with disabilities and/or those who use screen readers and visual aids.

## MAR 2021

**Hosted four listening sessions** for youth and equity-priority communities—including BIPOC, houseless individuals and families, and people living with a disability—in an effort to address demographic gaps in survey responses. Received feedback that equity-priority communities value engagement opportunities in affinity spaces.

## MAY 2021

**Launched the IBR Accountability Dashboard**, a transparency tool updated quarterly with community engagement, funding, expenditure, and disadvantaged business participation metrics. Comprehensive reports detailing community engagement tactics and outcomes are produced in conjunction with key program milestones and available on the Accountability Dashboard.

## NOV 2021

**Co-hosted four listening sessions** with community-based organization partners for 300+ equity-priority community members, sharing information and gathering feedback around design options.

Hosted two youth press conferences for Washington and Oregon high school and college journalists.