



I-5 Marvin Rd to Mounts Rd Planning and Environmental Linkages Technical Advisory Group Meeting #3 Summary

Meeting purpose

The purpose of the Technical Advisory Group (TAG) meeting was to:

- Confirm Level 1 Alternatives Evaluation Criteria
- Review and gather input on Level 1 Alternatives Evaluation Results
- Review and gather input on Level 2 Alternatives Evaluation Approach

Meeting logistics

March 14, 2023, 1:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.

Virtual Meeting

Attendees

TAG Participants

- Ann Freeman Manzanares, Intercity Transit
- Aubrey Collier, City of Lacey
- Bill Adamson, South Sound Military & Communities Partnership
- Christine Wolf, Port of Tacoma
- Dave Smith, City of Olympia
- David Troutt, Nisqually Indian Tribe
- Glynnis Nakai, Billy Frank Jr Nisqually National Wildlife Refuge
- Jeanette Dorner, Nisqually Land Trust
- Justin Hall, Nisqually River Council and Friends of Nisqually NWRC
- Katrina Van Every, Thurston Regional Planning Council
- Klayton Leingang, Pierce County
- Captain Kristene O'Shannon, Washington State Patrol
- Larry Leveen, ForeverGreen Trails
- Mark Burlingame, Town of Steilacoom
- Martin Hoppe, City of Lacey
- Matt Unzelman, Thurston County
- Mindy Roberts, Washington Environmental Council
- Paul Bucich, City of Lakewood

- Phyllis Farrel, Nisqually River Council
- Rob LaFontaine, Intercity Transit
- Sallie Donahue, Joint Base Lewis McChord
- Scott Egger, City of Lacey
- Sharon Love, Federal Highway Administration
- Shukri Sharabi, City of Dupont

WSDOT Project team

- Ashley Carle, WSDOT Project Team
- David Molenaar, WSDOT Project Team
- Emma Dorazio, PRR
- Gaius Sanoy, WSDOT Project Team
- George Mazur, WSDOT Project Team
- Hunter Henderson, WSDOT Project Team
- John Perlic, Parametrix
- Kirk Wilcox, Parametrix
- Lauren Wheeler, PRR
- Lucy Temple, WSDOT Project Team
- Richard Warren, WSDOT Project Team

Meeting Opening, Purpose and Goals

The I-5 Marvin Rd. to Mounts Rd. Planning and Environmental Linkages (PEL) Study Technical Advisory Group (TAG) met for the third time on Tuesday, March 14, 2023. The WSDOT study team began the presentation by welcoming participants, reviewing the agenda, and leading the TAG through introductions. The study team provided best practices and guidance for engaging using Zoom features during the meeting.



The study team convened the TAG to receive input, facilitate active participation, and build an understanding of the PEL process among local agency representatives. In the third TAG meeting, participants will confirm Level 1 Alternatives Evaluation Criteria and share input on Level 1 Alternatives Evaluation Results and Level 2 Alternatives Evaluation Approach.

The responsibilities of the TAG include:

- Representing agencies and communities in the study area
- Providing data and input on direction of study
- Advising on range of alternatives and alternatives evaluation criteria
- Helping to build consensus and support for alternative(s) selection

Schedule and study process

The team reviewed the study schedule and status. The study is on track with the planned schedule. The team reached FHWA concurrence point number two in early March, which focused on the Purpose and Need Statement. Concurrence point number three will focus on Alternatives Evaluation in TAG Meetings 3 and 4. Concurrence point number four, planned for July, will focus on the final PEL Report.

The study team provided a recap of Meeting 1, held on January 17, 2023, and Meeting 2, held on February 15, 2023. During Meetings 1 and 2, the study team shared the project background and desired outcomes of the study, advisory groups reached consensus on the Purpose and Need and Range of Alternatives and existing data sources, and participants shared feedback on the Alternatives Evaluation Process and the Level 1 Alternatives Evaluation Criteria.

Public comment on alternatives

Between February 15 and March 1, 2023, the study team received more than 250 comments on the proposed alternatives from the WSDOT project website, the project email, the WSDOT blog, social media, and during community briefings and interviews.

The study team provided a summary of the feedback received via public comment:

- Concern about understanding the environmental effects of the project
- High-Capacity Transit (HCT) compatibility, including rail
- Need for a separated shared-use path
- Induced demand from additional capacity
- Need to keep I-5 open during construction
- Need for improved/new alternate routes around I-5
- Importance of the Nisqually interchange/exit 114
- Suggestion of freight-only lane

Discussion

Christine Wolf (Port of Tacoma) asked who expressed the need for a freight only lane. The project team will revisit the public comment record and follow up with the answer via email.



Updates to Level 1 Alternatives Evaluation Criteria

Based on the feedback shared by the ACG, Technical Advisory Group (TAG), and Executive Advisory Group (EAG) during meeting series 1 and 2, the study team made the following changes in bold to the Level 1 Alternatives Evaluation Criteria:

- Separating congestion relief criteria into two criteria, which now read as follows:
 - Provides congestion relief for general purpose (GP) vehicles/trucks
 - Provides congestion relief for transit and High Occupancy Vehicles (HOV)
- Removing the bridge strike risk criteria, as all alternatives include replacement of the Nisqually River truss bridges.
- Adding criteria to measure negative impact on emergency response times.
- Updating language in the economic vitality criteria to measure outcomes for multimodal access to **opportunities**.
- Adding **Emergency response** to the support equitable outcomes criteria.

The project team previewed how the changes to the criteria will appear in the evaluation matrix and requested input from the TAG.

Discussion

- Bill Adamson (South Sound Military & Communities Partnership) noted that the evaluation criteria for supporting equitable outcomes include minimizing the flood risk potential for EJ populations and asked the project team to define EJ populations. For this study, EJ populations, or environmental justice populations, include low income or ethnic minority communities.
- Christine Wolf (Port of Tacoma) commented that river navigability is not a differentiating factor between the alternatives. The study team will share more about the river navigability findings later in the presentation.
- Bill Adamson (South Sound Military & Communities Partnership) asked if the study team has any information about planning level cost comparisons at this time. The study team will share preliminary estimates for the remaining alternatives during Meeting 4.

Following discussion, the study team shared a poll to ask if TAG members were satisfied with the updated Level 1 Alternatives Evaluation Criteria.

Poll #1: Do you support the updated Evaluation Criteria?

- a) Yes (17/17 or 100%)
- b) No (0/17 or 0%)

Initial Alternatives Evaluation results

John Perlic presented a table that displayed Alternatives 1-4 and Bridge Options A-D and what features they include.

Discussion

Bill Adamson (South Sound Military & Communities Partnership) asked whether local connections to the Billy Frank Jr Nisqually National Wildlife Refuge would remain if WSDOT and partners select an option that results in the closing of the Nisqually interchange. The study team



confirmed that visitors would still be able to access the refuge using either interchange before or after the Nisqually interchange and local roadway connections.

The study team shared a preview of the overall performance of each alternative and Design Option before exploring the findings in more detail, noting the higher performance of Alternatives 2 and 3 when viewing broad strokes.

Enhance mobility and connectivity

Evaluation Summary

- Alternatives 2 and 3 provide added capacity for HOV/transit and General Purpose/trucks and rated high-moderate compared to Alternative 1 (rated low) and Alternative 4 (rated low-moderate)
- Alternative 2 rates slightly higher than Alternative 3 (4 high ratings compared to 3 high ratings)

Discussion

- Rob LaFontaine (Intercity Transit) noted that Design Option D would result in the removal of an access point for Intercity Transit. Intercity Transit does not use the Nisqually interchange, nor does it intend to at this time. However, removal of this interchange might result in a potential loss of opportunity to offer a direct connection to the Marvin Way corridor.
 - The study team will consider whether this potential outcome is captured in the existing criteria.
- Christine Wolf (Port of Tacoma) asked how the study team analyzed person and freight throughput.
 - The study team noted that the evaluation of person and freight throughput was weighted towards person throughput since freight throughput was not a differentiating factor.
- Larry Leveen (Forevergreen Trails) asked why active transportation and public transit are grouped together.
 - The study team responded that active transportation facilities are the same across all alternatives, public transit is the only differentiating factor for the criteria.
- Bill Adamson (South Sound Military & Communities Partnership) asked whether Design Option D would result in a widened railroad pass abutment. The project team is still evaluating whether each Design Options A - C would fit within the existing Right of Way.
 - The study team responded that Design Option D would pass over the railroad, which would not require reconstruction of the railroad build, while Design Options A – C might result in reconstruction. The project team noted that Design Option D is more expensive than the other Design Options, even when factoring in the cost of railroad bridge reconstruction.

System resiliency

Evaluation Summary

- Design Options with longer bridges (C and D) remove the risk of erosion and channel migration from the entire Nisqually River Delta area compared to only a portion of the area with shorter bridges (A and B).
- All new structures will be built to current seismic code.
- The study team will follow up and report back on the question regarding tsunami activity and resilience.

Discussion

- Christine Wolf (Port of Tacoma) asked how the study team evaluated seismic resiliency, whether the evaluation considered if the structure would be safe or usable.
 - The study team noted that all bridge options will be able to withstand a severe earthquake. Generally, after an earthquake, an inspection is required before traffic can resume on a bridge. System resiliency criteria measure whether each Alternative and Design Option can withstand damage and respond in a controlled manner.
- Larry Leveen (ForeverGreen Trails) shared a link in the chat to a video about river migration and asked how design interacts with climate resiliency and river movement. (Link to video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UBivwxBgdPQ&themeRefresh=1>)
 - The study team noted that WSDOT will build bridges across the Nisqually River with shafts over 100 feet deep. The river will be able to migrate without eroding the bridge structure. The project team will study potential river movements during future design phases.

Environmental restoration and ecosystem resiliency

Evaluation Summary

- Design Options with longer bridges (Options C and D) would provide environmental restoration of the entire Nisqually River Delta area, compared to only a portion of the area with shorter bridges (Options A and B).
- Design Options B, C, and D would address impacts associated with flood events in all overflow channels, while Design Option A would address impacts associated with flood events in some overflow channels.

Economic vitality

Evaluation Summary

- Freight reliability and delay is lowest with Alternative 3.
- Alternatives 2 and 3 would improve access to jobs and recreation opportunities for active transportation users, HOV, transit, and GP traffic.



- Design Option D removes the Nisqually interchange, which removes direct I-5 access to adjacent businesses.

Discussion

Larry Leveen (ForeverGreen Trails) asked whether the criteria measuring equitable access and navigability account for the loss of interchange access for Design Option D.

- The study team confirmed that the criteria measuring equitable access and navigability relates to river navigability, not roadway navigability.

Equitable outcomes

Evaluation Summary

- All alternatives would have minimal displacements or impacts since the footprint is expected to be within the existing WSDOT right-of-way.
- Design Option D may require business displacements in the Nisqually interchange area.
- Alternatives 2 and 3 are expected to decrease emergency response times due to reduced congestion.
- Option D closes the Nisqually Interchange, resulting in increased emergency response times to and from this area.
- All alternatives address the impacts associated with extreme river flood events, minimizing impacts to Environmental Justice populations.

Discussion

- Katrina Van Every (Thurston Regional Planning Council) asked the study team to explain why flooding minimization is not a differentiating factor between Alternatives and Design Options.
 - The study team noted that even the shortest bridge would meet flood response needs. The flood analysis considers multiple factors and resulted in findings that each Alternative and Design Option results in substantial benefit flood relief.
- Christine Wolf (Port of Tacoma) requested that the project team consider the compounding effects of increased rain and King Tides, noting that the area has seen flooding beyond the 100-year sea-level rise projections due to this combination.

Relative Cost

Design Option A has the shortest elevated structure and lowest cost compared to Design Option D with the longest elevated structure and the highest cost.

The study team presented the following summary of the initial Alternatives Evaluation results:

- Alternatives 2 and 3 rate highest overall with more high ratings than Alternatives 1 and 4
- Alternatives 1 and 4 rate lowest overall with Alternative 1 rated slightly lower than Alternative 4

- Options B and C rate higher overall than Options A and D
- Option D rates low in the Support Equitable Outcomes and Relative Cost of Alternatives categories.
- Option D rates low in the Support Equitable Outcomes and Relative Cost of Alternatives categories.

Discussion

- Scott Egger (City of Lacey) asked to see the construction options in more detail before voting on design preference.
 - The study team noted that the constructions options were not included in this presentation to limit information overload, but shared a summary of each Alternative.
- Justin Hall (Nisqually River Council and Friends of Nisqually NWRC) asked whether WSDOT was considering local comprehensive plans in the evaluation. The Billy Frank Jr Nisqually National Wildlife Refuge comprehensive plan includes dike removal and projections of sea level rise in the area.
 - The project team is coordinating with Glynnis Nakai and using USGS modeling to understand flooding predictions in context with sea-level rise.
- Christine Wolf (Port of Tacoma) noted that, in addition to sea-level rise, the project team might consider how additional waterflow downriver due to climate-change-related ice melt may influence flood predictions. David Troutt (Nisqually Indian Tribe) noted that this topic was considered in USGS flood predictions.

Poll #2: Which Alternative(s) do you support advancing into the next round of evaluation?

- a) Alternative 1 – Operations Improvements (6/18 or 33%)
- b) Alternative 2 – Widen I-5 for HOV lanes (16/18 or 89%)
- c) Alternative 3 – Widen I-5 for General Purpose lanes (13/18 or 72%)
- d) Alternative 4 – Convert I-5 lanes from General Purpose to HOV (3/18 or 17%)

Poll #3: Which bridge option(s) do you support advancing into the next round of evaluation?

- a) Option A – 3,000 ft (8/19 or 42%)
- b) Option B – 6,000 ft (14/19 or 74%)
- c) Option C – 12,000 ft (14/19 or 74%)
- d) Option D – 14,000 ft (4/19 or 21%)

Level 2 Alternatives Evaluation Criteria

For Level 2 analysis, the study team will use the same evaluation criteria with an expanded rating scale from 3 to 5 colors. The study team will consider adding criteria to the Detailed Evaluation based on comments and feedback on the Draft Initial Alternatives Evaluation results. The study team will also add quantitative analysis results to several evaluation criteria and look at existing conditions of all resources in the corridor that have the potential to be impacted. Finally, the team will review existing conditions in the corridor for all resources potentially affected, including but not limited:



- Cultural/historic
- Wetlands, endangered species act listed species
- Floodways, sea level rise
- Socioeconomics and environmental justice
- Property acquisition (full and partial)
- Parklands and recreation

Discussion

David Troutt (Nisqually Indian Tribe) requested that the study team consider adding a criteria to measure alignment with Nisqually Indian Tribe treaty rights in the Level 2 Alternatives Evaluation Criteria.

Next steps

The study team shared the following next steps:

- WSDOT to post meeting materials for review
- TAG to review and share comments on detailed Level 2 Alternatives Evaluation Criteria
- WSDOT to share updated evaluation criteria and results before the next meeting in April
- TAG to brief EAG members before March 21
- TAG will receive a follow up poll to confirm support for advancing alternatives into detailed evaluation

The next TAG meeting is April 18, 2023. During TAG Meeting 4, the project team will present the result of Level 2 Alternatives Evaluation and facilitate a conversation about which alternatives will move into the final PEL.

The meeting adjourned at 2:33 PM.