

Magnolia Bridge Stakeholder Meeting Notes

Date and time: June 22, 2017, 1 – 2:30 PM

Location: Magnolia Community Center, Madrona Room

Facilitator: Marni Heffron, Heffron Transportation, Inc.

Project Managers: Pamela Vasudeva and Kit Loo, Seattle Department of Transportation

Support: Gretchen Muller and Erin Kirkpatrick, Cascadia Consulting Group

Attendees:

- Kelli Goodwin, Port of Seattle
- Mike Smith, Magnolia Chamber
- Tom Tanner, Magnolia Community Council
- Brian Van Abbema, King County Metro
- David Graves, Seattle Parks
- Kit Loo, Seattle Department of Transportation
- Chris Rule, Sound Transit
- Frank Gaul, Magnolia Interbay Queen Anne Disaster Preparedness
- Mike Stanley, Seneca/Expedia
- Lindsay Wolpa, Port of Seattle
- Geri Poor, Port of Seattle
- Megan McIntyre, BNSF
- Vamsi Maturi, BNSF
- Stephen Semenick, BNSF

Notes Summary:

SDOT is developing planning solutions should the existing Magnolia Bridge close temporarily or permanently. There are two phases of planning, a Short Term Transportation Plan (Short Term Plan) and a Long Term Transportation Plan. The short term plan includes an emergency access routes, traffic diversions, opportunities to increase roadway capacity, and other possible low cost solutions to maintain a similar level of service if Magnolia Bridge is closed. SDOT has issued an RFQ and is currently interviewing two consultants to assist with the long term planning study to evaluate up to 3 options if Magnolia Bridge is permanently closed.

The goal of the 2nd stakeholder meeting was to discuss the draft Short term Plan and the Emergency Bridge Closure Transportation Plan. Stakeholders were asked to provide feedback on the Short Term Plans by June 29, 2017.

Short Term Plan:

Marni Heffron of Heffron Transportation, Inc., discussed the details of the Short Term Plan and outlined a series of recommendations.

The purpose and goals of the Short Term Plan include making the system more resilient and using quick and inexpensive solutions to help maintain normalcy in the event of a temporary bridge closure. These goals include the following:

- Provide one way in and out of all affected properties, including the Marina.

- Prioritize moving people instead of vehicles, with an emphasis on transit improvements and pedestrian/bicycle connection to frequent transit routes within the Magnolia neighborhood and the 15th Ave W corridor.
- Retain freight access for the Port of Seattle, industrial properties in Interbay and businesses in Magnolia Village.
- Optimize vehicular flow with low-cost solutions that focus on minimizing bottlenecks to alternatives routes to connect to 15th Ave W.

If Magnolia Bridge is closed and traffic must be rerouted to Dravus and Emerson there will likely be bottlenecks are at W Dravus St and 15th Ave W, W Dravus St and 20th Ave W, and W Emerson Pl and Gilman Ave W.

Heffron stated that there are a number of solutions to improve traffic flow and are relatively low cost design changes. These recommendations are as follows:

- Develop a detour plan that provides additional scenarios beyond traffic being diverted to W Dravus Street.
- Update the traffic signal equipment at W Dravus St and 15th Ave W and connect the signal to the Downtown Traffic Operation System to allow for adjusting the signal timing based on traffic demand. Currently, the system is pre-timed and doesn't adjust as traffic flow changes.
- Add a westbound left turn signal at W Dravus St and 20th Ave W to divert people to Thorndyke Ave W and restripe the westbound through lane to become a left-turn-only lane.
- Develop alternative signal timing protocols for the responsive signals on 15th Ave W that allow signal phasing changes at the W Garfield Street intersection to eliminate this movement. Additionally, the signal timings would allow for increased traffic volume on the segment of 15th Ave W between W Garfield Street and W Dravus Street.
- SDOT will evaluate the feasibility of opening the median at the intersection of 15th Ave W and W Bertona St (the roadways are off grade by 1-2 feet and there is an 8 foot median). . This would require adding a new signal at 15th Avenue W and W Bertona Street.

Additional recommendations include:

- Collaboration between the Port and Anthony's to relocate the dock loading area.
- Collaboration between SDOT and BNSF to identify a site(s) for the pre-staging of materials to allow an emergency vehicle crossing in the case that all bridges are down after a catastrophic event.
- A portion of the BNSF tracks at W Armory Way are within SDOT right-of-way. This could be a place to have a temporary access route via Port of Seattle property to 20th Avenue W.
 - Megan McIntyre of BNSF stated that this is not a good location to install the crossing area, as it is the "hump yard" where all the train cars break down and switch tracks, which happens 24 hours a day.
 - This would work as a temporary emergency vehicle crossing but is not a long-term solution. SDOT needs to work with BNSF to identify best location(s) for crossing.
- Identify a potential short term at-grade mainline crossing (SDOT, BNSF, Port).
 - McIntyre stated that the overpass at Garfield doesn't allow for new at-grade crossings.

- We could consider W Ewing Street/W Emerson Pl to W Commodore Way.
- Identify areas of opportunity for gated and signaled controls.

Heffron then solicited ideas for other elements that could be done in advance. Lindsay Wolpa of the Port of Seattle inquired about the timeline of installing netting under the bridge to catch falling debris. Pamela Vasudeva of SDOT stated that while there are two locations where a bike path goes under the bridge, people are not technically supposed to be under the bridge. Wolpa stated that a city commissioner is personally interested in the topic and has publicly discussed it on a number of occasions. Tom Tanner of the Magnolia Community Council stated that the community is very concerned about debris falling off the bridge and encourages a comprehensive approach to managing this debris. These approaches could include steel netting, but could also include limitations on uses under the bridge.

Tanner also suggested the possibility of installing activated gates that would close the bridge immediately following a seismic event until the bridge could be inspected. After the previous event, traffic was not closed on the bridge and vehicles continued to cross even though the bridge had not been inspected. He stated that this should happen during the advance preparation stage. Vasudeva stated that this solution is not economically feasible and that other solutions need to be reviewed first.

Tanner suggested connecting W Marina Pl and W Galer St by adding a multi-use trail that could also be used by emergency vehicles. Wolpa stated that the Uplands development is underway and has priority, but that the whole area is under development.

Heffron then described elements of the Short Term Plan that could be implemented immediately after a closure event. These include the following:

- Implement a detour plan that corresponds to the type of closure, which could include weight restrictions, a partial closure of the bridge, or a full closure. Heffron also stated that materials could be pre-staged near BNSF tracks. (McIntyre indicated they can store ballast near the identified emergency crossings).
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- Restrict access at the 15th Ave and W Dravus Street on- and off-ramps, such as the southbound movement on 15th Avenue W to the W Dravus Street on-ramp. Traffic could be rerouted to 17th Ave W via W Bertona Street.
- Restrict the westbound left turn from W Dravus Street to southbound to 15th Avenue W freeing up capacity for the intersection to provide a dual left turn signal. Traffic wanting to go southbound on 15th Ave W can be redirected to 16th Ave W and W Bertona St.
- Restrict one lane of the W Dravus Street on- and off-ramps for carpools or buses. This has been a solution in other situations. When I-90 was closed for repairs, drivers weren't allowed to cross the 520 Bridge unless it was a carpool.
- Create a temporary Marina access that extends from W Marina Place via 23rd Ave W to a new temporary route parallel to Elliot Bay Trail. The road would likely connect to 20th Avenue W or 21st Avenue W. This would require opening the gates at the north part of the Uplands and stripe the temporary road for vehicular access. Wolpa stated that using the fire lane for vehicular access would be feasible.

If the bridge is closed for six months or more a traffic plan is need to keep traffic flowing. Options include: (1) adding a signal at W Bertona St and 15th Ave W, (2) identifying an area to allow for at-grade

crossings across the tracks. Vasudeva added that these planning measures would only be implemented after assessing the type and nature of the closure and what would be most beneficial. The plans wouldn't be put into place unless closure was certain. SDOT also wants to keep short term solutions low-cost.

Short Term Planning Wrap Up:

McIntyre inquired about the funding for the long term planning and the replacement bridge design. Vasudeva stated that funding to take the project to 90% design wouldn't be in place until the next levy in 2025. Construction couldn't happen until after that. Current funding only allows for design to 10% completion. During the long term study, SDOT will explore other funding sources to accelerate the design and construction of the preferred option.

Brian Van Abbema from King County Metro inquired about the proposed timeline for the signal improvements discussed for implementation now. Vasudeva stated that SDOT is currently working with traffic operations and looking for money to make these improvements.

Emergency Bridge Closure Transportation Plan:

An Emergency Bridge Closure Transportation Plan was developed in the event that Magnolia loses all three connection points. Heffron described that there are seven volunteer groups throughout the city representing different districts that would step in and take control of neighborhood communications in this worst-case scenario, SDOT has met with the Magnolia Interbay Queen Anne Disaster Preparedness (MiQA) liaison Frank Gaul. . Gaul stated that the group is planning a dry run exercise on July 29th.

Heffron laid out the initial steps in the case of a state of emergency and she stated that the Seattle Fire Department is in control of what happens on the ground. MiQA's role is to assess the situation on-ground and to communicate these findings to the Fire Department and other organizations. SDOT would dispatch engineers for bridge inspections. Heffron stated that the Fire Department has a predetermined route that they drive to evaluate if they can get emergency vehicles in and out of areas throughout the city.

Heffron outlined additional steps in the event of a worst case scenario, as outlined in the Emergency Bridge Closure Transportation Plan.

- Step 1 – Assess and Communicate Viable Routes: Inspect the bridge, identify detour routes and communicate road conditions with preparedness team.
- Step 2 – Provide Redundant Emergency Vehicle Access Routes: Evaluate how to get emergency services into the neighborhood. **Action items for SDOT** – SDOT worked with BNSF to establish locations for foot paths and emergency vehicle at-grade crossings during a catastrophic event. The two locations include W Ewing St to W Emerson Place to Commodore Way, and Galer Street, just south of Magnolia Bridge
- Steps 3a and 3b – Provide system redundancy for Magnolia Residents (3a) Provide Transportation Hubs and Transit Connections (3b): Develop a plan to get people that reside in Magnolia back into the neighborhood if they are outside of the area at the time of the catastrophic event. These individuals may need to get back into the neighborhood by foot.

In this case, multiple walking routes need to be established. Additionally, there may be additional opportunities to move people, such as a ferry.

- Step 4 – Provide for Goods and Delivery: Ensure that food, water, and medicine can get transported into Magnolia.

If the bridges collapse, McIntyre stated that BNSF would probably be back up and running within 24 hours. Initially the foot paths would not be a conflict but something would need to be identified for the long term. For vehicular travel, gravel or ballast would be the quickest method for providing a temporary crossing over the tracks. Narrow crossings would be the best. W Galer St would likely be the best area to add a crossing location if possible. If the Emerson Bridge is still up a route from Ewing Street to Commodore Way via Emerson Pl could be an option since there it is a very narrow crossing and is a spur not on the mainline.

Heffron stated the importance of establishing redundant routes. Commodore Way might be an option. Ford Street Bridge is weight restricted and it would likely not be an option.

Closing Remarks and Meeting Wrap-up:

Wolpa stated that the Port is happy to work with the emergency planning team and would like to be involved in the upcoming event on July 29th (Magnolia Interbay Queen Anne Disaster Preparedness Group is planning a dry run exercise on July 29th).

Tanner stated that it may be logical in some of these scenarios to make Thorndyke Ave W a transit only street.

Chris Rule of Sound Transit stated that the light rail planning for the elevated line on 15th Ave W is estimated to include 8 years of construction and is currently estimated for an opening in 2035. The current status is in procurement and they hope to have a team on board in October.

Wolpa suggested that SDOT develop a timeline with a bar graph or another visual element to help with the understanding and marketing for the Short Term and Long Term Plans and capture project milestones like dates for the bridge RFP, ideal levy time, and ideal construction time.

Pam Vasudeva thanked everyone for coming and reminded them to send her any additional comments about either the Short Term Plan or the Emergency Bridge Closure Transportation Plan. The plans will then be finalized and posted on the project website. The next stakeholder meeting will likely be in early fall once the long term transportation planning team is under contract.