

OVERVIEW

The City of Wilsonville, in partnership with Clackamas County, hosted an open house on Feb. 22 for the proposed French Prairie Bridge Project. More than 70 people participated in the event, weighing in on key questions at four stations around the room, and completing 35 comment forms. The City also hosted an online open house which was live from Feb. 22 to March 12. Thirty-six participants weighed in online.



With community Task Force members and staff present, City Councilor and Task Force Co-Chair Charlotte Lehan opened the event. She thanked participants for their time and interest, and gave a short overview of the history of the project, which was conceived by citizens more than two decades prior. Clackamas County Chair and Task Force Co-Chair Jim Bernard then introduced Zach Weigel, City project manager, and Bob Goodrich, consulting team manager. They gave a short presentation on key dates leading up to this study, other alternatives considered, the project schedule and the importance of the evaluation criteria in decision-making. Facilitator

Kirstin Greene encouraged participants to complete the comment form before leaving, and to share the online link with friends, family and co-workers.

Station 1: Project Overview

Station 1 presented an overview of the project, with boards displaying the project's key questions and study area, as well as a regional context map and project schedule. Participants were asked if they had any thoughts or comments on the project overview provided.

While community members had differing opinions regarding the desirability of the project, many felt that the bridge would be a valuable asset to Wilsonville, both for emergency access, active transportation connections and the tourism draw. Community members raised questions about plans for funding, parking impacts in riverside neighborhoods, as well as the lack of bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure along the narrow countryside roads on the south side of the river. In addition, many were interested in learning more about the location choice of the Study Area.



Station 2: Bridge Uses

Station 2 asked community members to describe how they would use French Prairie Bridge and what they see as the key destinations served by the bridge. A large format aerial map of the Study Area and its surroundings was provided for people to make notes about the uses and destinations.

Overall, the use of the bridge for emergency access was well supported. Short and long-haul bicycling touring around the Willamette Valley was also mentioned, in addition to short trips across the river to enjoy the waterfront, fishing opportunities and local stores in Wilsonville. Many agreed that the extent of bridge's use for recreation purposes may be limited by topography as well as infrastructure for cyclists and pedestrians on the south side of the river.

The most frequently mentioned key destinations served by the bridge included:

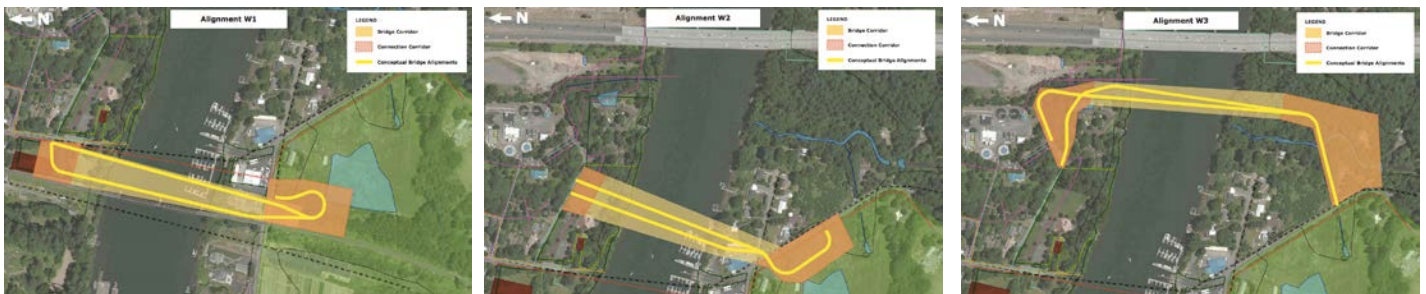
- Willamette Valley Bike Trails (9)
- Charbonneau (6)
- Access to shopping and Wilsonville's downtown (6)
- Champoeg State Park (5)
- Willamette River (2)
- Medical facilities (2)

Station 3: Bridge Alternatives

Station 3 asked for feedback on the three bridge alternatives. The Station provided a display board with an aerial image of the project study area, overlaid with a graphic of the three alignment alternatives.

While responses were varied, some community members indicated their preference for alignment W1 and W3 because they have the least impact on homes and existing businesses. W1 was noted several times as being the most direct and logical corridor in terms of connectivity and access, while W3 has ample park area around the bridge landing points for parking, restrooms and event staging. Several questions were raised for W3 about potential freeway noise and impacts from the nearby sewer plant.

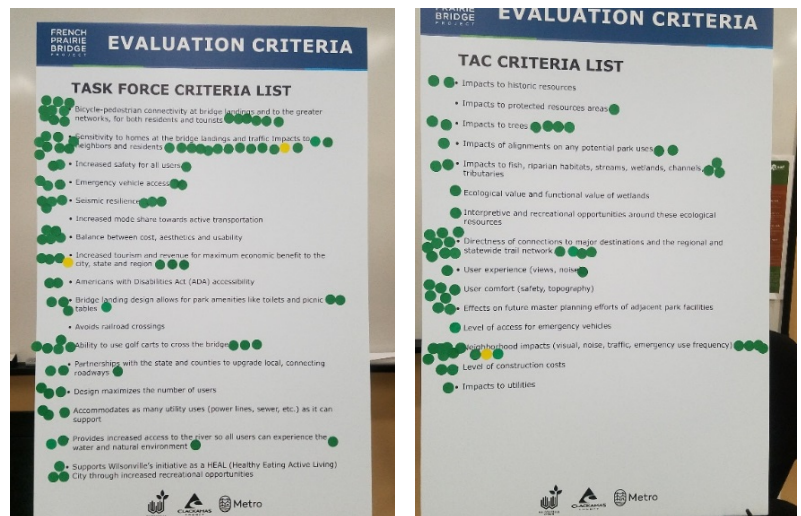
Overall, community members expressed interest in learning more about the cost of the bridge and the potential impacts it would have on homes, private property and the Boones Ferry Marina, as well as the quality and aesthetic of the bridge. Questions were raised over the lack of infrastructure for cyclists and pedestrians on the south side of the river.



Station 4: Evaluation Criteria

Station 4 asked community members two key questions: what is most important to them; and what should be considered in the selection of bridge landing points and types. A list of evaluation criteria proposed by the project Task Force and the Technical advisory Committee was displayed on two boards. Participants were asked to use a green dot sticker to identify which criteria they thought was most important. A nearby easel pad also provided the opportunity to suggest additional criteria.

Overall, community members felt that the evaluation criteria proposed by the Task Force and TAC were comprehensive. Between the Task Force and TAC lists, the following top two criteria were identified as most important:



Task Force Evaluation Criteria

- Sensitivity to homes at the bridge landings and traffic impacts to neighbors and residents (23)
- Bicycle-pedestrian connectivity at bridge landings and to the greater networks, for both residents and tourists (15)

TAC Evaluation Criteria

- Neighborhood impacts (visual, noise, traffic, emergency use frequency). (14)
- Directness of connections to major destinations and the regional and statewide trail network. (13)

Other thoughts/recommendations?

Community members were invited to provide any additional ideas or overall thoughts. Some of these included:

- The bridge would be a major asset to Wilsonville and connect it to the valuable regional bike network, increasing the tourism draw to the area.
- Impacts to private residences, businesses and neighborhoods should be closely monitored.
- Questions were raised about the greater traffic and transportation issues in the area.
- Questions were raised about the infrastructure for pedestrians and cyclists when they come off the bridge, especially on the south side of the river.

Next steps

At the end of the Open House, City project manager Zach Weigel thanked community members for attending and providing valuable feedback. He reviewed next steps, reminding the group that the Project Management Team and Task Force members will consider this feedback when determining the evaluation criteria and associated weights for each criteria in order to inform the decision-making process.