

I-5: N. Ashland Interchange – Green Springs Project Aesthetics Advisory Committee (AAC)

Meeting #5 Summary

April 15, 2009
11:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.

Attending:

AAC – Michael Dawkins, Kate Jackson, Katharine Flanagan, Jennifer Longshore, John Rinaldi, and David Young (absent: Jonathon Warren, Tom Giordano, and Jerome White)

Project Team – Alex Cousins, John Galbraith, Gary Leaming, Tim Fletcher, Tim Dodson, Art Anderson, John Lowe, Karen Tatman, Mark Baker, Matt Koehler, Tiina Beaver

City of Ashland – Ann Seltzer, Maria Harris, David Chapman

Welcome and agenda review

Alex welcomed everyone to the fifth meeting of the AAC. The goal for today's meeting is to reach consensus on the design treatments for the bridges at Exits 14 and 19 as developed by John Galbraith. Alex commended the work of John's team in responding to the input of the committee and reflecting their feedback in the exhibits on display today. The AAC will have the opportunity to vote on specific design details later in the meeting.

After a round of self-introductions, John Galbraith walked everyone through the designs, which included bridge treatments as well as landscaping.

Aesthetic Treatment Options for Exits 14 and 19

There were six display boards showing the various bridge components in two general design themes: Stylized and Less Stylized.

Stylized (version A)

The Stylized bridge designs feature natural stained concrete (earth tones) with more design detail than in version B. There are striations in the concrete (piers, superstructure and pylons), Ashland Springs Hotel art deco motif on the corbels and center of the fencing, a stylized emblem on the center of the superstructure below the railing, acorn style lighting, corten steel bumpers around the columns, and decorative banners on the light poles. There are openings for artwork inside the bridge railing if the City decides to include artwork on the bridge. The design features 8 light poles, which are sufficient to light the bridge (there is no need for pedestrian light poles in addition to the street lighting). The landscaping at this exit will feature irrigation.

There was a question about the pedestrian lighting inset in the inside bridge rail as suggested by the AAC. It is not featured in the exhibits. Karen commented that the team has determined that the overhead lighting is sufficient to light the bridge deck and sidewalk. The pedestrian lighting doesn't really serve a lighting purpose, plus it could be vandalized and be a maintenance concern. Ann responded that the ACC requested this and in her view it is not an issue of need but rather an issue of aesthetics. John Lowe commented that the team will take note of this.

Another question was asked about the place markers for art inside the railing. How easy would that be to install? The areas should be well defined. John Galbraith commented that the railing could easily accommodate artwork; however there is no specific funding for that in the project budget.

Less stylized (version B)

The Less Stylized designs are, just as their name implies, less detailed than version A. There are no striations in the concrete, no detailing on the corbels, no center fence detailing; the lines are cleaner and simpler. The concrete is unstained and grey in color. The pylons are simpler with fewer striations. The street lighting features a Eurotique design.

John then commented on the design for **Exit 19** which has a clean look and is even simpler in design. Like version B, there is no center fence detailing and few striations in the concrete. This design features a slate form liner treatment on the abutments instead of the striations. The landscaping is natural, drought tolerant, and low growing.

John noted that all of the lighting shown on the exhibits is the dark sky type which directs the light downward, not upward. (Councilor Chapman inquired later whether the lights are full-cutoff vs. cutoff only).

AAC Discussion

Someone inquired about coloring the surface of the bike lane differently from the roadway. This idea was brought up by the AAC previously. Karen noted that this idea is really not feasible. A stained or colored concrete surface adjacent to the roadway would be difficult to maintain in the future when the roadway (asphalt) and bridge (concrete) surfaces require an overlay or re-stripping. Ann asked how the bike lane could be distinguished from the roadway then. Karen said the distinction is made via white striping and the stenciled bike emblem.

Someone commented that there are some bike lanes in Bend that have a different color treatment from the roadway. The project team wasn't familiar with that. Someone else asked if it mattered whether the bicycle lane was a bike path instead. Could a path have different treatments? Karen noted that it could if it was not part of the roadway. Bike paths are usually off-road facilities. This project also has distinct limits to the bridge and

immediate vicinity. It is not a large area. A colored bike lane that is confined to the bridge only and not extended into the surrounding roadway might be confusing for some people.

Another person inquired about the height of the concrete railing on the bridge. Could the height be raised beyond what is shown on the exhibits? The concern was for the safety of cyclists on the bridge who might struggle against the wind. Are there standards for the height of the rail? Karen noted that there are standards but in this instance there is some flexibility. The committee and team then debated the merits of raising the height of the railing. There was some concern that it could create a “tunnel” effect. Ultimately, the majority of the AAC determined that they prefer the railing height as shown.

Another question was asked about the streetlights. Will the light poles match the poles supporting the traffic signals? Yes, they can be matched for continuity.

Discussion turned to the stepped concrete emblem on the side of the superstructure (version A). A few people commented that it looked too Southwestern in style. A suggestion was made to de-emphasize the stepping and for the emblem to be fluted. There could be fewer vertical striations inside the center and the striations could extend further out into the stepped down area. John commented that his team had wrestled with that and he agreed the suggestions would probably help make it more Art Deco in appearance. Everyone liked the variation of mesh in the fencing as well as the raised Ashland Springs hotel motif in the middle of the fence.

A suggestion was made concerning the abutments – pointed rocks would discourage people from camping under the bridge. This is a problem for this location.

Alex asked the AAC members who represent various boards and commissions what they had learned from talking to their constituent groups about the designs:

- The Tree Commission generally likes the designs. They prefer irrigation at Exit 19. Landscaping in this climate without irrigation is not likely to survive.
- The Public Arts Commission is excited about the designs. They questioned how art fits in. (No funding, but a placeholder for future art).
- The Planning Commission is ok with the track the AAC is on (simple, clean design). One of the Commission members (1 of 8) preferred Exit 14 to be more of a focal point, making a stronger statement.
- The designs were well received by the Chamber of Commerce board and staff. Exit 14 makes a nice statement as you enter the community.

Prioritization Exercise

Alex then asked the committee members to engage in a prioritization exercise for the bridge design elements by placing small green stickers directly on the display boards. There are 9 design categories to choose from. Each person was given 9 stickers. The categories are generally grouped by Stylized (version A) and Less Stylized (version B). It is possible to mix and match the design elements from among both versions. Tiina Beaver walked everyone through the choices:

1. Columns (A or B)
2. Concrete rail emblem (A or B)
3. Pylons (A or B)
4. Corbels (A or B)
5. Light poles (Acorn-style or Eurotique style)
6. Sidewalk (words or textured stamp)
7. Color (A (stained) or B (unstained))
8. End bents (A or B)
9. Fencing (A or B)

John Lowe suggested leaving the displays with the City so that the 3 missing AAC members could cast their votes afterward (*see Post-AAC Meeting section at the end of this document*).

Results

Tiina reviewed the results of the prioritization exercise.

1. **Columns** – 5A 1B
2. **Pylons** – 4A 1B (plus 1 in middle of both)
3. **Concrete Rail Emblem** – 6A
4. **Corbels** – 6A
5. **Light Poles** – 1A 5B
6. **Color** – 6A
7. **Sidewalk** – 3A 3B
8. **End Bents** – 6A
9. **Fencing** – 6A

Alex summarized the outcome: The AAC chose version A – a naturally-colored, more stylized bridge design with striations on the piers, pylons, rail emblem, corbels and end bents. They also selected the Eurotique style light poles and the more stylized fencing. They were evenly split on the sidewalk detailing. Alex noted that with the exception of the sidewalk, which can be decided later, the committee was unanimous or near unanimous on every choice. He led a round of applause for the group's hard work.

Alex asked about the one vote for the pylons that was placed in-between versions A and B. The AAC member replied that she personally favored fewer striations than what is

shown in A, but could live with the results of the group. Someone else commented that perhaps the spacing of the striations could match the spacing in the fencing for continuity.

Another person noted that the choice of the Eurotique light poles conflicts with the type of fixtures already on Ashland Street, which are Acorn style. The Eurotique style poles are on Siskiyou Blvd.

Landscaping Discussion

John Galbraith discussed the landscaping designs. There is no real change from what was presented to the AAC last time. The aim is for a natural look and feel. The designs look linear but will have a natural mass and form. It is possible to do some hydro-zoning. His team used lower ground cover type plants to help prevent spots where vagrants might want to camp.

The plantings are chaparral type and drought tolerant. At Exit 14, on the south side of the bridge, there is lots of texture and seasonal color with flowering pear trees, flowering bulbs, groundcover roses, and mass plantings of Ceanothus. On the north side of the bridge, the plantings reflect the more northern types with taller, native evergreen trees and redbud dogwood.

The plantings around the bridge at Exit 19 will include native white oak groves, native evergreen, Ceanothus and Oregon Grape. There is no irrigation in this area, but the construction work could accommodate conduits for future irrigation installation.

The AAC discussed the designs. They appreciated the colorful, 3-dimensional design with 4-seasons interest. Someone asked whether the plantings are deer resistant. John noted that generally they are, but the roses could pose a problem. What is the height of the planted trees? Generally that is budget dependent. Installed trees are typically 6-8' high. The existing trees at Exit 14 can be re-planted elsewhere.

Another question was asked about the gabion walls that were discussed at a previous AAC meeting. John responded that the cost of the gabion walls came in at \$500,000 to feature them at a height where they would be noticed. That exceeded the available budget. There is however an opportunity to terrace the landscaped area with moved fill from lowering I-5 under the bridge. There is also an opportunity to bring in large boulders as an accent in the landscaping.

We do have landscaping estimates now for the project. \$250,000 is estimated for Exit 14 and \$100,000 for Exit 19. Someone asked whether any potential cost savings for the bridge work could be put into the landscaping. Karen responded that there is no ceiling budget for the project. The team worked toward applying what the AAC wanted within the OTIA program goals and setting a reasonable amount of funds aside to complete the landscaping.

Another AAC member asked if there was a way for the City or volunteer groups to make more of the landscaping. Art responded that ODOT would gladly accept donated material and coordinate with the City to make sure that it is safely installed. ODOT can accept donated material and possibly labor, but safety in the construction zone is the big concern. ODOT would be more inclined to accept donated materials. The idea is similar to integrating public art on the bridge – the project could leave some spaces in the landscaping open for future additional plantings. Can irrigation be stubbed out at Exit 14 and left for future plantings? Yes.

Someone else commented that it might be nice to extend the taller trees north of Exit 14 a little more to the north – low plantings could extend beyond the trees where they dribble out to the point in the northeast and northwest quadrants.

Tim Fletcher noted that the AAC had not commented much on the design for Exit 19. The committee agreed that they support the version A design shown on the exhibits and really had no additional suggestions.

There is a concern about the lack of dedicated bike lanes on Exit 19 for one of the AAC members. He mentioned that a letter about the subject has been circulating around the City. It was delivered to the mayor. The team noted that the bridge will be designed to accommodate future bike facilities when the area builds out and the lanes are justified. The featured design of Exit 19 won't preclude future bike lanes or sidewalks. It will be built to handle the 20-year growth of the area. The other AAC members agreed that bike lanes are presently not justified and that there will be ample shoulder room on the bridge (10' on each side across the bridge and 8' on the roadway) to safely accommodate cyclists.

Ann acknowledged the hard work of the AAC and the Design team to reach this important milestone for the City. She specifically singled out the efforts of ODOT, OBDP, Quincy, John Galbraith and JLA as evidence that ODOT is committed to partnering with the community.

Next Steps

The next step in the process will be the public open house planned for Thursday, May 28. There will be two meetings that day: a mid-day meeting at Pioneer Hall on Winburn Way (11:30 – 1:30 timeframe) and an evening meeting at the Windsor Inn at Exit 14 (5-7 pm timeframe). The project team will create new exhibits that reflect the results of today's meeting. The AAC will receive notice of the meetings. Committee members are not required to attend but are encouraged to try to make one of the meetings if their schedules permit.

This will not be the last meeting of the AAC. Another meeting will be held later this summer (date TBD) at Progress Plans when the designs will be close to being finalized. It will be an opportunity for the AAC to review the final plans.

1:00 p.m. Adjourn

Post-AAC Meeting – Additional Voting

Three members of the AAC were not able to attend the April 15 meeting (Jonathon Warren, Tom Giordano, and Jerome White). The meeting displays were left with the City so that these committee members could stop by at their convenience to cast their votes for the aesthetic design options.

Amended Results

Here is the final tally of the prioritization exercise. There were no significant changes to the previous outcome, other than a preference for stamped concrete sidewalks at Exit 14.

1. Column	4.15.09	4.27.09
Option A	5	7
Option B	1	2
2. Pylon		
Option A	4	6
Option B	1, 1 combined	1, 1 combined, 1 Neither
3. Concrete Rail		
Option A	6	9
Option B	0	0
4. Corbel		
Option A	6	8, 1 Neither
Option B	0	0
5. Light Poles		
Option A	1	1
Option B	5	9
6. Color		
Option A	6	9
Option B	0	0
7. Sidewalk		
Option A	3	5
Option B	3	4
8. End Bent		
Option A	6	8, (1 vote missing)
Option B	0	0
9. Fencing		
Option A	6	7
Option B	0	2