

Snake River Bridge Summary of Public Open House August 27, 2015

Introduction

The Idaho Transportation Department (ITD) is developing plans to replace the Snake River Bridge in Marsing and improve Idaho 55 between Marsing and the U.S. 95 junction.

The Snake River Bridge was built in 1955 and is the primary river crossing in the area. Approximately 6,500 cars cross the bridge every day. The Snake River Bridge has exceeded its life span and needs to be replaced.

On August 27, 2015, ITD hosted a public open house to gather input on preliminary design plans for the Snake River Bridge and Idaho 55 roadway improvements. The open house was held at the American Legion Hall in Marsing from 4 to 7 p.m.

In all, 148 people attended the public open house and 49 comment sheets were submitted.

This document includes:

- The format, preparation and notification process for the public open house.
- A summary of key findings and most frequently heard comments from the open house.

Open house format

The public open house was held at the American Legion Hall in Marsing on Thursday, August 27 from 4 to 7 p.m.

Large visual display boards were used to present information about the project. Attendees were welcome to come and leave at any time, and project staff were available throughout the event to answer questions.

ITD and RBCI (public involvement consultant) greeted attendees at the door, asked them to sign in, provided them with a meeting guide and comment sheet and encouraged them to view the display board stations that were set up around the room.

ITD and T-O Engineers Inc. consultant staff were available to talk with attendees and answer questions. All participants were encouraged to fill out a comment sheet, and tables and chairs were placed around the room for those who wished to do so.

The display board stations included:

- **Station 1: About This Project**
Explained the process, schedule and background for the Snake River Bridge replacement project and roadway improvements for Idaho 55.
- **Station 2: Environmental Analysis**
Outlined the purpose and need for the project and environmental considerations that will be taken into account.
- **Station 3: Proposed Improvements**
Presented preliminary design plans for the new Snake River Bridge and roadway improvements for Idaho 55 between Marsing and the U.S. 95 junction.
- **Station 4: Construction**
Presented an overview of construction phasing and impacts.
- **Station 5: Next Steps**
Provided information about next steps for the project and how attendees could stay involved.

Preparation and notification

Preparation for the public open house began several months in advance. The public involvement team prepared a detailed meeting plan that outlined the purpose, event logistics and display board content.

Notification for the public open house was conducted in several ways:

- Residents, property owners, agencies, business owners and elected officials received a public meeting invitation in the mail.
- Advertisements for the open house ran in the Idaho Press Tribune on Sunday, August 23 and in the Owyhee Avalanche on Wednesday, August 19.
- An electronic version of the open house invitation was posted on ITD's and City of Marsing's websites.
- A news release announcing the public open house was distributed through ITD's media manager system on Thursday, August 20.
- RBCI walked throughout the City of Marsing on August 25 to invite community members to the public open house.
- Sandwich signs were posted at each end of the bridge to advertise the location and time for the public open house.

Summary

The purpose of the August 2015 public open house was to give the community an opportunity to comment on:

- The Snake River Bridge preliminary design plans
- Roadway preliminary design plans (Idaho 55 between Marsing and U.S. 95 junction)
- What is important to the community during construction

Bridge Preliminary Design Plans | *Key findings*

- The most commonly-repeated comment was that the bridge should be designed as four lanes wide to prepare for the future.
- Many participants commented that lanes on the bridge should be at least 18 feet wide to accommodate farm equipment.
- Many participants would like to see the design plans provide better protection for pedestrians and people who fish from the bridge. Safety is one of the community's most significant concerns.
 - Some participants suggested including a separate bridge/walkway for pedestrians so they do not have to cross a busy road to access the park and fishing areas.

Roadway Preliminary Design Plans (Idaho 55 from Marsing to U.S. 95 Junction) | *Key findings*

- Most participants were supportive of the roadway preliminary design plans.
- Many participants support adding curb, gutter and sidewalks to be included within the City of Marsing.
- Some participants suggested that parking be eliminated in front of Caba's because it creates poor visibility for drivers turning left onto Idaho 55.

Issues Important to the Community During Construction | *Key findings*

- The most commonly-repeated comment was that there needs to be enough room to move farm equipment over the bridge during construction. Many participants explained that they move farm equipment over the bridge on a frequent basis and need enough to accommodate them (at least 18 feet wide).
- Many participants commented that they are concerned about traffic congestion and long delays during construction. Some suggested that ITD keep the existing bridge open while the new bridge is built to reduce traffic impacts.
- Many participants were concerned about access to boat ramps and the public park. The river and park are used regularly by the community and maintaining access to these areas throughout construction is important.
- Some participants explained that safety for pedestrians, children and people who fish off the bridge is very important during construction.

Questions

- Why is ITD not designing the new bridge with four lanes?
- Will the new bridge be lit up at night?
- How will farmers cross the bridge with their equipment during construction?
- Is a four-lane bridge being considered when planning for the future?
- Could ITD build a pedestrian bridge over Idaho 55 for children to cross over traffic?
- Why do the sidewalks end before the city limits?
- How will the bridge be snow plowed and sanded efficiently during construction?
- Is new sewer drainage included as part of the improvements?
- Will there be a signal for a school crossing at Highway 78?
- Will Idaho 55 be widened to four lanes from the bottom of Sunny Slope?
- How long will construction take to complete?
- Would it be possible to bring natural gas across the river to Marsing as part of this project?