

## MINUTES OF THE MEETING

**Jenny A. Durkan**  
Mayor

**Rico Quirindongo**  
Interim Director, OPCD

**Justin Clark**, Chair

**Vinita Sidhu**, Vice Chair

**Adam Amrhein**

**Kim Baker**

**Jill Crary**

**Elizabeth Conner**

**Azzurra Cox**

**Mark Johnson**

**Amalia Leighton**

**Elaine Wine**

**Michael Jenkins**  
Executive Director

**Valerie Kinast**  
Coordinator

**Aaron Hursey**  
Planner

**Juliet Acevedo**  
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**August 19, 2021**

Convened 8:30 am

Adjourned 3:30 pm

**Projects Reviewed**

33<sup>rd</sup> Ave W Pedestrian and Bicycle Bridge

Georgetown to South Park Connection

Pike Pine Streetscape and Bicycle Improvements

**Commissioners Present**

Justin Clark, Chair (excused 8:30 – 10:30 am)

Vinita Sidhu, Vice Chair (Action chair 8:30 – 10:30 am)

Adam Amrhein

Kim Baker

Jill Crary (excused 9:00 – 10:00 & after 2:30)

Elizabeth Conner

Azzurra Cox

Mark Johnson (excused after 10:30)

Amalia Leighton-Cody (excused 10:30 am – Noon & 1:30 – 3:30 pm)

**Commissioners Excused**

Elaine Wine

**Staff Present**

Michael Jenkins

Valerie Kinast

Aaron Hursey

Juliet Acevedo



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**August 19, 2021**  
**9:00 – 10:30 am**

**Project:** 33<sup>rd</sup> Ave W Pedestrian and Bicycle Bridge  
**Type:** CIP  
**Phase:** Concept Design  
**Previous Reviews:** None  
**Presenters:** Christa Dumpys, SDOT  
Miranda Hagedorn, WSP  
Michael Ward, SDOT

**Attendees:** Joy Jacobson, ADA Compliance, City of Seattle  
Sophie Turnbull-Appell, Stepherson & Associates

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**Recusals and Disclosures:** Justin Clark recused

### **Project Description**

The Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT) is evaluating options to rehabilitate or replace the 33rd Ave W Pedestrian and Bicycle Bridge in Magnolia. While still safe to use, the bridge is showing signs of deterioration and is near the end of its useful life. This timber bridge connects people walking and biking across an active railroad corridor to Commodore Park in Magnolia and the Ballard Locks area. It provides access between Ballard and Magnolia, connecting cyclists to Discovery Park and jobs in Uptown, South Lake Union, and Downtown.

### **Meeting Summary**

This was the Seattle Design Commission's (SDC) first review of the project. The purpose of this meeting was to review the concept design phase (30% design) for the project. Following the presentation and discussion the SDC voted, 7-0, to approve the concept design phase of the 33<sup>rd</sup> Ave Pedestrian and Bicycle Bridge project with several recommendations. The project will be reviewed again at a later phase.

### **Summary of Presentation**

The team presented the project scope, schedule, and context. They described the bike network, user groups of the bridge, and initial input received from the community.

Currently the bridge has a 7% continuous grade, which is not compliant with ADA. While the south and north approaches are not as steep, they are above the 3% ADA threshold.

Outreach included breakout sessions with neighbors and community groups to discuss what could be improved upon and how people were using the bridge. Width, decking materials, and site lines were areas where the community saw room for improvement. Seattle Parks identified signage as an area for improvement.

The team explained that an analysis and ranking exercise were completed on three alternatives. The alternatives were 1) Rehabilitation 2) Replacement in same location, 3) Replacement in configuration that complies with grade requirements of the ADA. While it would require more space than the others, the third alternative could still be accomplished within existing City right-of-way. The estimate of upfront costs of Alternative 3 were higher, but long term cost estimates were lower.

The team presented the results of a community survey, which favored alternatives two and three. The community expressed support for better access for people with disabilities for equity reasons.

Bridge types, configurations, and materials were presented. The team reported that both concrete and steel truss and steel girder options were being evaluated. Steel truss bridges require more maintenance, are hard to install in tight conditions, but provide aesthetic opportunity. Steel girder bridges are easier to construct on tight sites. Concrete girders have high appeal in Washington because easy to build. Maintenance and aesthetic are weaknesses of this type though.

The options for deck materials were described. Timber holds safety concerns because it becomes slick when wet. It also has high maintenance needs. Another drawback of wood is that it is complicated to drain. The team explained that fiber reinforced polymer (FRP), aluminum, and grating were also evaluated. The cost and drainage challenges of these materials were considered prohibitive. Concrete was selected for the decking, with the acknowledgement that it is heavier and maintenance is more difficult.

For the railing and throw fences over the BNSF right-of-way concrete and metal were considered. The team chose metal. For the bridge walls, the team was considering facing.

Lighting will be provided. The team reported that they would be working with neighbors, various City entities, and BNSF to develop lighting plans to address safety and be compatible with the wildlife in the area.

A Blue Heron nesting area is located near the site. The project will retain buffers and phase construction to so as not to disturb the birds.

## **Agency comment**

None

## **Public Comments**

None

## **Summary of Discussion**

Overall the commissioners expressed a preference for the third alternative.

The discussion focused on four main topics:

1. Bike and pedestrian network connections
2. Functionality of the experience
3. Expression and Aesthetics
4. Constructability and Natural landscape

### **Cyclist and Pedestrian Connections**

Commissioners noted the hidden location of the bridge and discussed enhancing its connections to the neighborhoods north and south. This trail segment should be seen in the context of the broader network of routes where pedestrians and cyclists are linked between the amenities of the neighborhoods including jobs, retail, parks, and cultural institutions. Gaps in how people are able to travel by bike and/or if they are mobility impaired should be identified. The SDC expressed a desire to see opportunities identified to improve linkages beyond the project, even if those would need to be funded and undertaken later or by others.

### **User Experience**

The SDC discussed how people would move through the site and experience it. Commissioners expressed concern at the lack of visibility at the approaches, particularly the south approach. They discussed the idea of providing pause points at the knuckles of the approaches. As site disturbance and restoration is considered, opportunities for creating pull outs and perhaps a place to stop and look trains should be explored. Throw barriers should be designed to avoid a feeling of being constrained. Given Seattle's dark winters, lighting is important on this bridge.

### **Expression and Aesthetics**

Commissioners asked the team to provide an aesthetic expression that makes the bridge an asset in its unique location in Seattle. They noted the green, natural setting and the

engineered character of the nearby ship canal and maritime industrial areas. They asked the team to reference the cultural history and develop a story for the new bridge that is sensitive to the green context and picks up the craft and character of the built environment. Choices for the bridge elements, retaining walls, lighting, and fencing can be employed, and concrete lends itself well to telling stories. Given the scale of the retaining walls and the impact of design features like pedestrian guard rail and throw barriers, the SDC asked the team to include an architect, landscape architect, or an artist to guide development of this story that carries through all elements of the design.

### Constructability and Landscape

The discussion touched on vegetation, with questions about the extent of construction impacts and plans for restoration. The SDC encouraged the team to continue developing the plans for drainage, planting, and sustainability and consider how they might inform the overall concept for the bridge.

The challenges of constructability in the BNSF was noted as something that might be a very limiting factor.

### **Action**

The SDC thanked the project team for their presentation of the concept design for the 33<sup>rd</sup> Ave W Pedestrian and Bicycle Bridge project. Overall, the SDC supported the third alternative and providing accessibility for people with disabilities. It appreciated the rigor that went into evaluating the alternatives and the early community outreach efforts. Commissioners acknowledged the challenges of designing in this location over railroad right-of-way. The SDC voted, 7-0, to approve the concept design for the 33<sup>rd</sup> Ave W Pedestrian and Bicycle Bridge with the following condition:

Provide to a subcommittee of the SDC for comment at around the time of early 60% design,

1. Plans for where the team will include enhanced architectural and urban design elements such as wall finish, pedestrian guard rail, throw barriers, columns/piers, bridge soffit/fascia, expansion joints, and decking;
2. Opportunities for project connections and accessibility in a broader area beyond the site;
3. Information on constructability; materials and sustainability, and landscape restoration.

The SDC also provided the following recommendations:

1. Strengthen connection of the bridge to the bike and pedestrian networks in the area, in particular accessible routes. Strengthen wayfinding and identify gaps where the City may need to provide additional resources to maximize this investment.

2. Continue to explore and report on the extent of disturbance, constructability, and how it impacts design decisions.
3. Continue to develop and report on revegetation plans, stormwater, and the sustainability approach. Consider bioremediation.
4. Provide good visibility for cyclists with the design. Include lighting given the long, dark Seattle winters.
5. Provide space for pause points where people can stop, rest, enjoy the location and perhaps view trains.
6. Provide a cohesive architectural expression of the bridge that draws from the maritime and cultural history and is an asset in its natural setting. Employ the design of all elements of the bridge toward this end including the bridge structure, deck, and walls, retaining walls, railings and fencing, and lighting. Consider involving an artist, landscape architect, or architect for this.
7. Avoid the use of galvanized metal.

The SDC anticipates reviewing the project again at 60% design in subcommittee. The full SDC will review the project again in early 90% design.