

FOX ISLAND BRIDGE

Community Meeting Q&A

June 29, 2022

Questions were submitted online before the meeting and via Zoom during the presentation.

Fall 2022 Repair Project Questions:

Funding

Q: *Who is paying for the repairs of the bridge?*

A: The repair project is completely funded through the County Road Fund.

Q: *What is the estimated cost expected for this repair?*

A: The construction costs for the repair are approximately \$500K-\$900K.

Q: *Is there an estimate of cost for Repairs required from 2023 - 2050? If not, why not? Based on your cost estimate of \$600K-\$900 for 2023 repairs, what is the annual estimate for Repairs and why does Pierce County not plan on an annual repair plan? And what amount of repair funding on an annual basis is expected to support the Fox Island bridge?*

A: Currently, we estimate approximately \$20 million in repair costs over the next 5 to 10 years. This is in addition to the \$1 million for the bearing replacement project this fall. Sometime within the next 10 to 20 years we estimate an additional \$50 million will be needed to retrofit the bridge substructure and foundations. This estimate is based on 2016 dollars and would need to be adjusted for inflation and current market for the year repairs are made.

Construction

Q: *If there is a possible supply issue for replacement bearings, why not order now?*

A: The awarded contractor will be responsible for ordering the necessary structural parts for the project to eliminate risk for the county.

Q: *Are Piers 17 and 20 on land or in the water?*

A: Both piers are in the water.

Q: *What is the current estimation of life span for the existing bridge with the repairs that are projected?*

A: The bridge is currently about 70 years old, the new parts that will be replaced as part of the repair project this fall could last approximately 100 years. Typically bridges built during the era of the existing Fox Island Bridge were designed for an anticipated 50 year design life.

Q: *Is it possible, or is it planned, to have a weekly calendar that shows expected times of lane closures or night bridge closures?*

A: Yes, we will provide dates of closures in advance on our website, please note that construction schedules are subject to change, but we will keep closure information as up to date as possible.

Seismic data

Q: *What magnitude earthquake can the current bridge withstand?*

A: The magnitude of earthquake the current bridge could withstand is extremely variable and dependent on many variables such as location of the earthquake, depth, direction, duration, and foundation soil composition to name a few. The structural design and condition of the individual structural elements will also factor into the bridge response to an earthquake. As such, it is not possible to accurately determine the maximum magnitude of earthquake the bridge could withstand.

Q: *Will the repair increase earthquake tolerance?*

A: No, the bridge's earthquake tolerance will remain the same with the proposed repairs.

Q: *What damage did the bridge sustain in the Nisqually earthquake in 2000?*

A: The Fox Island Bridge did not sustain any observable damage in the Nisqually earthquake.

Future Bridge Replacement/General Questions:

Funding

Q: *How much roughly will total bridge replacement cost?*

A: Approximately \$180 million.

Q: *Have you replaced any other bridges in Pierce County or repaired other "sections of Roadway" without charging a toll or tax to users, all users?*

A: Yes, many other repair and replacement projects have been completed without tolling or taxing specific travelers but no single project of this magnitude. Although the Fox Island Bridge was initially a toll road when it was built by the Washington Toll Bridge Authority in 1954 and up until 1965, Pierce County road projects have historically been funded through a combination of property taxes, fuel taxes, real estate excise taxes, development impact fees, grants, and sometimes bonds or loans.

Q: *Why are you considering charging a toll to use the County owned Fox Island Bridge?*

A: The financing study completed in 2019 did identify tolling as a possible element of a successful funding strategy but no funding for this project is currently authorized, nor has a specific funding strategy been decided for the replacement option. Due to the magnitude of this project, a multi-pronged approach with a variety of funding sources will be needed to support the replacement of the Fox Island Bridge.

Q: *Why hasn't funding been secured/ Why haven't tax dollars been set aside to fund this project?*

A: Due to the need to repair and maintain all county infrastructure, it is not viable to set aside or save tax money for every piece of infrastructure owned by the County. Additionally, in order to know how much the project will cost, the County must have the findings from the full Type, Size, and Location Study for the

replacement of the bridge before proceeding with securing construction funding from various sources. Grant funding was previously pursued but not attained for the full Type, Size, and Location Study.

Q: *I pay county taxes. Why are my taxes not going to pay for this project?*

A: A portion of your county taxes do go into the road fund – currently \$1.16/thousand assessed valuation. All road taxes are intended to provide funding to build and maintain ALL of the county roadway system. This includes projects such as the widening and improvement of Wollochet Drive in 2013 and 2014 (totaling \$17M), the asphalt overlay of Fillmore Drive in 2020 (totaling \$577k), and all bridge inspections and repairs. No funding is currently authorized, nor has a funding strategy been determined for the replacement option. A balanced approach with multiple funding sources is needed to meet the level of funding required for the replacement of the Fox Island Bridge. The County will apply for grants and seek funding opportunities in addition to options like tolling or tax increases throughout all phases of this project.

Q: *Why haven't grants been applied for yet?*

A: Grant funding for the full Type, Size, and Location Study was previously pursued but not awarded. Most federal and state grant programs require local matching funds and/or a significant amount of engineering and environmental planning to be completed before a project can be considered. The County will continue to apply for grants and seek funding opportunities throughout all upcoming phases of study whenever we can meet the eligibility requirements. Completing the Type, Size, and Location study will bring us one step closer and make us more competitive for future grant awards.

Q: *Will some of the Federal Infrastructure money go towards the replacement project?*

A: We are aggressively working to identify federal and state grant strategies to support the replacement project. The Federal Infrastructure bill targets projects that are closer to delivery/construction and most of these funds must be obligated by 2025. This means that we would have to certify in our grant application that we can start construction no later than 2025. Until the full Type, Size, and Location study is completed, and we are further along with environmental review and permitting processes, we cannot make that commitment.

Q: *Can we seek federal funding if we cannot get the funds through the county or state?*

A: Yes, the county will seek federal funding at every opportunity throughout the process.

Q: *Why isn't this project put in with all the other Washington state road and bridge improvements?*

A: Since this bridge is a county road, it is the county's responsibility to handle maintenance and repairs and assess the bridge's lifespan. In some cases, Washington State Department of Transportation will consider accepting other transportation facilities into its system. The county is evaluating criteria to see if the Fox Island Bridge would meet the state's requirements.

Q: *Can you please compare the County funding for transportation to and from Ketron Island, for only a few families, to the funding for the bridge which serves hundreds of families?*

A: The cost to provide service to Ketron Island is \$431.83 per stop there. There are 3 scheduled stops per day, and we stop there 365 days per year. Total annual cost to provide service to Ketron is roughly \$470,000 per year. This number is approximate as we sometimes cancel stops due to no demand. Residents of Ketron pay between \$19.93 and \$26.24 per passage to get to the island with a small car and more for a truck or larger vehicle.

Q: *When we get to bridge replacement... wondering if state or federal funds are available to help?*

A: The county will seek all state and federal funding options at every opportunity throughout the process.

Q: *What type of grant funding for the bridge replacement project do you expect to be able to obtain?*

A: Grant funding is a highly competitive process. We will identify and apply for every opportunity for which this project is eligible, but it is impossible to predict for sure how much money we would receive or from which sources. The further we are through the design process, meaning the closer we are to being construction-ready, the more competitive we will be in the application and scoring process.

Q: *What percentage of the Total Funding do you think will be obtained?*

A: The amount is variable and unknown at this time, but the county will apply and work hard to be competitive for grant funding as well as looking into other programs.

Q: *Since there's already been a preliminary Type, Size, and Location study, why are you doing another one at a cost of well over a million dollars, and where is this money coming from?*

A: The preliminary Type, Size, and Location study was intended, in part, to help us determine if rehabilitation / retrofit was a more viable alternative than replacement. In the preliminary study, we did not go into the level of detail that is necessary for a full Type, Size, and Location study, so as not to spend money unnecessarily, if the rehabilitation / retrofit alternative ended up being the most cost-effective approach. In the final Type, Size, and Location study, we will build on the work completed in the preliminary study.

Q: Have you considered an RID, Road Improvement District, for funding?

A: Yes, this is one of the many funding options we are looking into. It's a means of collecting revenue from a specific area and can only be used for a certain project.

Q: *Could there be allowance for island residents to be exempt from a toll?*

A: Since the Fox Island Bridge is not a connecting corridor, an exemption for residents would render the tolling ineffective.

Design/Construction

Q: *Would a lower bridge or causeway be a cheaper alternative?*

A: Right now, we are focusing on the repair project for this year. The full Type, Size, and Location study for the replacement option will evaluate alternatives in size, configuration, location, etc. and there will be many opportunities for public engagement before any decisions are made.

Q: *If it will facilitate lower cost to repair or replace the Fox Island Bridge, is the County and State willing to divert marine traffic away and around the FI bridge to facilitate a lower cost to repair/replace the cost of the bridge?*

A: The horizontal and vertical marine clearances will be evaluated as part of the Type, Size and Location study; however, the US Coast Guard will have the final approval authority on the ultimate configuration.

Q: *Will homeowners affected by the inconvenience; noise of construction be compensated?*

A: Inconvenience is an unfortunate effect of construction and will not be compensated. Noise impacts will be assessed during the property acquisition phase and will be a part of the appraisal process for those homeowners directly affected by the project.

Q: *Will homeowners be provided new noise-reduction windows to reduce the additional noise level?*

A: Noise impacts will be assessed during the property acquisition phase and will be part of the appraisal process for those homeowners directly affected by the project.

Q: *Will roundabout at Bella Bella be included?*

A: No determination has been made regarding the intersection configurations at either end of the bridge alignment. This geometry will be evaluated as part of the final Type, Size and Location study and there will be multiple opportunities throughout the pre-design process for public input and feedback.

Q: *Is a floating bridge a viable option, or is it a more expensive?*

A: The full Type, Size, and Location study will inform the most cost-effective bridge replacement option. Generally, the option of a floating bridge is more expensive.

Q: *On the website, there is a conceptual plan for replacement where bridge is built 'beside' current bridge....is this the approach that is going to be basis going forward, or is it possible other concepts will come forward?*

A: The Type, Size, and Location Study will inform this decision and determine which concept is most viable.

Q: *Will a range of sea level rise scenarios be included in the Type, Size, and Location study?*

A: Yes, the full study will incorporate sea level rise in its determination.

Q: *Approximately what is the timeline from start of study to beginning of construction?*

A: It will be a range, likely longer than at least 5 years.

Q: *If everything went 'smoothly', when would a new bridge be expected to be complete?*

A: Depending on start date of construction, the bridge would likely take 2-3 years to construct.

Q: *Will a ferry terminal be considered in case the new bridge cannot be funded? A ferry terminal should be available in case the existing bridge is closed.*

A: A ferry system was considered in the [2019 financial scenarios](#) analysis and was determined to cost significantly more than a bridge replacement.

Other

Q: *Heavy loads are currently going across bridge for construction - more than the posted weight. No recourse or action to prevent. Should there not be a levy or toll for those heavy loads?*

A: If a toll system is enacted, all users will pay a toll when crossing the bridge.

Q: *The boat launch is used for commercial use daily which adds to the erosion and breakdown of the ramp. Should commercial users pay a toll?*

A: If a toll system is enacted, all users will pay a toll when crossing the bridge.

Q: *How much influence and decision weight will Fox Island residents have in the final Design, Location and Cost of the replacement bridge?*

A: There will be multiple hearing opportunities throughout the pre-design process for public input and feedback. Once scheduled, we will notify Fox Island residents of how to attend and give feedback to County Council.

Q: *Do "we" the Fox Island residents have an advocate within State of WA legislators, senators, etc. wanting to know specifically if any individual has a broader awareness of this concern?*

A: Yes, Pierce County Councilmembers are aware of this future project and its impact.

Q: *Should the houses near the bridge be concerned their homes will be forced in eminent domain?*

A: The full Type, Size & Location Study, followed by the engineering design, will determine what property and property rights are necessary for the project.

Q: *Who paid for the bridge in Marysville when that bridge was damaged and collapsed. if the state paid, are we waiting for a catastrophe before the state participates in replacement.*

A: The bridge in Marysville is a Washington State owned and operated highway, the Fox Island Bridge is currently owned and operated by Pierce County, so all repairs are the county's responsibility.

Q: *The Fox Island Bridge is an iconic symbol of the Puget Sound, especially with the views. Can it be made into a historical bridge/monument that eliminates it from replacement?*

A: Currently, it's not a historic bridge.

Q: *Would historical registration open additional funding sources?*

A: No, it opens some different funding sources, but it closes other funding sources that are currently available to us.

Q: *Have you studied how many long-term residents of fox island would be financially displaced due to the cost of the bridge being passed on to them instead of the greater county at large, as is standard for all county projects?*

A: No funding is currently authorized, nor has a funding strategy been determined for the replacement option.

Q: *When the second Narrows was in planning, a Canadian company offered to build it for free if they could capture the electricity from underwater turbines. Could the same technology be used on the Fox Island bridge?*

A: We are not currently looking into this option.

Q: *Originally the Fox Island bridge had a toll, what percentage of the cost did the residents pay for and what percentage did Pierce County pay for?*

A: In August 1954, the Fox Island Bridge opened at a cost of \$1,500,000 and operated as a toll bridge until 1965. We don't currently have these comparisons and will continue researching the cost differences.

Other comments:

- Not true about bikes.
- I am interested in bike lanes and wider pedestrian walkways, and I live on Fox Island.
- I want you to be careful with your language when referring to how Fox Island property taxes are a relatively small amount. We are all very aware that we are a small number of residents, but we're also very aware that our tax money goes to the whole county... just as everyone else in the county should be paying for our roads & bridges. Wording from the county is often seen as disrespectful in this area of conversation. We just want a safe bridge with minimal features and to be paid for like any other county road or bridge replacement... not costing our residents extra money.
- It sounds like the ideas for a bridge replacement has high end features (bike lanes/pedestrian ways) ...and that these items will be part of the negotiation going forward. I believe a new bridge is needed, and

hopefully can be designed so that truck loads will not need to be restricted as much as they are now, and that we will have a safe bridge

- I want to thank the speakers for having this open house...it is very much appreciated and how the process should work.
- The passion shown tonight exemplifies the desire to preserve a way of life. Without this passion we bend over and relinquish what makes life here so special.