River Crossing Project

Environmental Assessment (NEPA/SEPA) Scoping

Engagement Summary

Background

The River Crossing Project of the Canyon Road Regional Connection is undergoing an environmental review process. This is an essential time to bring the project to the community and generate public input opportunities. The project team will use community feedback to refine the project. Pierce County began the NEPA process with scoping in summer 2020. The team plans to share draft discipline reports in early 2022 and conclude the NEPA Process with a final public hearing in late 2022.

The purpose of the River Crossing Project is to improve regional mobility of goods and people between the Port of Tacoma and Frederickson manufacturing/industrial center. Due to the expected regional growth in the area, the project is needed to provide a reliable freight corridor that is independent of the existing road network. The River Crossing Project includes a new bridge from Canyon Road East across the Puyallup River into Fife. Pierce County will extend Canyon Road East 52nd Street to 70th Avenue East in the City of Fife.

Pierce County’s goals for community engagement during the environmental review process are to:

- Formally introduce the environmental assessment process to the public, local agencies, and other key decision-makers.
- Share the project’s purpose and need and opportunities for public participation.
- Collect community feedback on the project’s benefits and impacts.
By the numbers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Engagement methods</th>
<th>Participants/recipients</th>
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<tr>
<td>Online open house</td>
<td>6,400 unique visits</td>
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<tr>
<td>Virtual town hall</td>
<td>30 attendees</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pamphlet mailer</td>
<td>585 households</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Email</td>
<td>173 email listserv recipients</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Comment options</th>
<th>Comments</th>
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<tr>
<td>Online open house</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Email</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postal mail</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telephone hotline</td>
<td>1</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social media</th>
<th>Clicks</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Facebook</td>
<td>5,514 unique clicks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twitter</td>
<td>49 total clicks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instagram</td>
<td>89 total clicks</td>
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Outreach methods

The scoping comment period was open from Tuesday, July 7 to Friday, August 7. Social distancing requirements during the summer of 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic restricted in-person engagement, so the community engagement approach provided alternative methods for equitably informing the community and soliciting comments.

The following approaches were designed to reach as many homes and businesses as possible within one mile of the project area, including options for participation from people who do not have access to high-speed internet and/or have limited proficiency in English language.
Online open house
The online open house was a branded website introducing participants to the project and the agency’s interest in public input. It included a project overview and maps, details on how to provide comments, links to project materials and supporting documents, photos and graphics, and a comment form. The comment form asked for contact information and gave participants the option to leave comments on the project.

Site content
The online open house had four tabs highlighting different subject areas:

- Welcome/home page
- Project details
- Environmental review process
- Share with us

The online open house also linked back to the project website.

Welcome/home
The Home page summarized the River Crossing Project and explained the purpose of the online open house.
Project details

The Project Details page showed the project’s planned improvements and oriented viewers to the project location. The page highlighted the current Milroy Bridge and a rendering of the future bridge. It also displayed a timeline for right of way acquisition, design, and construction.

Environmental review process

The Environmental Review Process page explained what an environmental review is and described the environmental resource areas the project team is analyzing as part of the review. The page invited visitors to type their comments at the bottom of the page in the comment form after they read through the information presented. The page encouraged visitors to comment on any other environmental resource areas the project team should evaluate and any possible impacts they should look at.
Share with us

The Share with Us page invited users to submit additional comments about the project or environmental review. It also listed other comment opportunities and the project email address for users to send additional questions about the project once the online open house closed. This page also went over next steps, including when to expect a summary of findings from the environmental review.
Project pamphlet mailer
The project team mailed a project pamphlet with a short survey and comment form to 585 addresses within a one-mile radius of the project area to provide businesses and families with information about the project and how to submit comments. The mailer included key messages in Spanish and the online open house link, project hotline, project email address, and address for mailed comments.

Virtual town hall
The project team held a virtual town hall from 7 to 8 p.m. on July 23. A virtual town hall is a webinar that allows presenters to share information with a large online audience and accept live feedback. Participants submitted comments using the Zoom question and answer feature or by virtually raising their hand. Of the 102 people that registered for the event, 30 attended.

Accessible comment options
Community members had four options to submit comments to Pierce County during the comment period. These included:

Online comment forms (online open house)
The online open house, as described above, guided users through project and environmental review information with commenting opportunities on the last two pages. The comment form questions were:

- Are there any other environmental resource areas we should evaluate?
- Are there any possible impacts we should look at?
- Do you have particular knowledge about one or more of the environmental resources that we should know about? (for example – if you have information about potential cultural and/or historic resources in the area, we would like to know.)
Do you have any other comments or questions?

Telephone hotline
A 24-hour telephone hotline accepted voice message comments during the 30-day comment period. A phone tree included greetings in English and Spanish. The hotline was an opportunity for people who have limited internet access or connectivity issues to submit project comments.

Project email
The project inbox accepted emailed comments and attachments throughout the 30-day comment period. The project team listed the email address on all project materials, including the project website, online open house, and mailer.

Postal mail
Residents and businesses within one mile of the project area had the option to mail in their comments during the 30-day comment period using the comment form included with the project pamphlet mailer. The project team posted the mailing address on the project website, online open house, and published it in the project mailer. The postal mail comment option was another opportunity for people who have limited internet access or connectivity issues to submit comments.
Notification

Pierce County notified the public about the online open house and alternative engagement opportunities through the following activities:

- Notice of Intent published in the Federal Register and the Determination of Significance in the SEPA Register.
- Online display ads and social media posts (as described in the section below).
- Direct mail pamphlet and survey sent to all the addresses within a one-mile radius of the corridor.
- Email notice and reminder sent to the project listserv and other contacts.
- Announcement posted on Pierce County’s project website.
- News release sent to statewide media announcing the scoping engagement opportunities.
Notification by the numbers:

- Pamphlets with tear-off comment cards sent to 585 residents and businesses.
- 173 individuals received an email notice on July 7 and 189 individuals (including new subscribers) received an email reminder on July 21 via the Canyon Road Regional Connection Project listserv.
- Geotargeted Google ads received 266,959 impressions and 1,420 clicks with a click through rate of .53%. The click through rate was on par with the overall industry benchmark.
- Google ads targeting Spanish speakers received 105,205 impressions and 437 clicks with a click through rate of .42%.
- Banner ads on TheNewsTribune.com received 141,284 impressions and 86 clicks with a click through rate of .06%.
- Banner ads on PuyallupHerald.com received 29,121 impressions and 33 clicks with a click through rate of .11%. PuyallupHerald.com lives on TheNewsTribune.com website and received better engagement than TheNewsTribune.com pages. However, the ad on PuyallupHerald.com reached the maximum number of impressions served, which limited its performance.
- Two Facebook posts from the Pierce County account with 13,724 followers.
- One Facebook post from the Pierce County Planning and Public Works page with 4,228 followers.
- Two Twitter posts from the Pierce County account with 44,203 followers.
- One Instagram post from the Pierce County account with 2,813 followers.
Website traffic and social interaction

The online open house received 6,400 unique visits during the 30-day comment period. A visit is when at least one page loads for a user. “Unique” visits count a user who visits the site multiple times only once.

Pierce County posted a link to the online open house three times on Facebook, including one post by the Pierce County Planning and Public Works page, twice on Twitter, and once on Instagram. Users shared the Facebook posts a total of 323 times and received a total of 584 reactions and 466 comments. The Twitter posts received nine likes, five comments, 4,829 impressions, and 49 clicks. The Instagram post received seven likes, 436 impressions, and four clicks.

Pierce County boosted one Facebook post. The ad received 5,514 unique clicks. Due to limited analytics, the bounce rate cannot be calculated. However, because the number of clicks is close to the number of unique visits (6,400), we know a large amount of traffic came from the Facebook ad to the online open house.

Comment summary

Community members submitted a total of 82 comments: 24 via email, 55 through the online open house, one through the project telephone hotline, and two through postal mail.

The comments focused on various aspects of the project, including:

- Preserving and/or moving the Milroy Bridge
  - Many participants urged the project team to leave the existing Milroy Bridge in place, in addition to building the new bridge, to serve as an alternate route for bicyclists/pedestrians and to accommodate local traffic during peak times.

- Local congestion and problem areas
Many people expressed concern that the new infrastructure will cause more congestion and not effectively decrease the time it takes to cross the river.

- **Project design**
  - Many participants submitted project design ideas. Several participants would like to see a wider bridge and car lanes that are wide enough to handle large trucks and trailers. Many commenters also proposed having two bridges instead of one. They would like to see a safer bridge with a better traffic signal system.

- **Project timeline**
  - Several commenters expressed excitement about the bridge replacement project, said it was long overdue, and hoped it could happen sooner than currently planned.

- **Right-of-way impacts, including several about the Radiance housing development and the Ardena Gale mobile home park**
  - Several participants owning property or living near the project area expressed concerns about right-of-way impacts and the property acquisition timeline.

- **Agricultural community**
  - Several participants had questions about the project’s effects on farms in the area and encouraged the project team to investigate other options that do not affect local farms.

- **Bicycle/pedestrian improvements and safety**
  - Several participants urged the project team to add bike lanes and sidewalks and consider leaving Milroy Bridge to use as a pedestrian and non-motorized bridge. Several residents said the area by the river needs more walkways and there is currently no safe bike route between Puyallup and Fife.

- **Environmental**
  - A few participants expressed concern for the wildlife and streams in the area as well as how the potential increase in traffic will impact agricultural crops grown in the project area.