DEPARTMENT OF ENTERPRISE SERVICES

DESCHUTES ESTUARY Restoration Project

Community Sounding Board Meeting Summary

Date: March 11, 2024 **Time:** 5:30 – 8:30 PM

Location: Zoom **Topic:** Fishing, 5th Avenue Bridge Experience, and Recreation

Meeting Summary

Welcome & Introductions

Ann Larson, Project Director with the Washington State Department of Enterprise Services (DES), welcomed Community Sounding Board (CSB) members and other participants and observers to the meeting. Susan Hayman, Facilitator, described the meeting objectives and led introductions. She also welcomed public observers, and reminded them a public comment opportunity would be provided towards the end of the meeting. She thanked the public for conducting themselves as silent observers with webcams off for this and any CSB meeting.

History and Conceptual Design Overview

Ann and Tessa Gardner-Brown, project manager for the consultant team under DES (Floyd|Snider), provided a brief project history including natural history of the Deschutes Estuary and stewardship of the area by the Squaxin Island Tribe to the modern development Olympia and the Capitol and the current efforts to restore the estuary. Tessa pointed out that the commonality throughout this rich history is how people are all unified through water. Tessa then presented a conceptual overview of the estuary restoration project, which can be found on the project website, linked here.

CSB members were invited to ask any clarifying questions about the project overview.

- **Arc of Statehood:** A member asked if the hardscape along the east side of the North Basin would remain. Tessa said the current plan for this area (known as the Arc of Statehood) is to retain it, but this is under consideration.
- **Side Channel Maintenance:** A member asked how side channels will be maintained within the basin. Tessa described that, after construction, the goal for the estuary is to be self-sustaining. There are no plans for dredging south of 5th Avenue (in the restored estuary). Allowing the channels to naturally accumulate sediment will lessen how much sediment goes into West Bay. She also stated that it is important to note that the current figures are from the EIS, and the design is evolving now.
- **Habitat Islands:** A member asked if new habitat islands will be built. Tessa said habitat islands, as well as shoreline fringing habitat, is planned in the North and Middle Basins. The habitat islands can be configured to help capture sediment. She reminded CSB members that sediment will be carried throughout the tidal system. Tessa also explained that the mouth of the Deschutes River starts at Tumwater Falls and extends nearly two

miles to the current bridge, and this project will restore the estuary in the majority of that area.

- **Flooding:** A member of the CSB stated that the lake was partially created to help with tidal flooding and that removing the dam may have an impact to future flooding events. The estuary will receive tidal salt water flows. Flooding and sea level rise benefits and impacts are being taken into account in the design process. Numerical modeling shows that estuary restoration will reduce maximum flood elevations approximately 1 foot compared to conditions where the dam is maintained.
- **Reimagining the Waterbody:** A member asked whether this project design is a historical reimagining of the waterbody. Tessa said it is, though historical channel alignments are being used as a basis for design, along with hydrodynamic modeling.
- **Aquatic Invasive Species:** A member asked how aquatic invasive species would be addressed or how they might affect West Bay once the dam is removed. The team explained that many will be addressed through the reintroduction of saltwater, in which the invasive plant species cannot survive. The invasive New Zealand mudsnail is anticipated to be significantly reduced through the reintroduction of saltwater, but some may remain in shallow shoreline areas. Measures will be taken to minimize their spread to other waterbodies, including through the use of decontamination stations at boat launches.
- **Capitol View:** A member mentioned the importance of maintaining views to and from the Capitol and the reflection of the dome on the water at high tide. They suggested that island placement and dredging take this into consideration, and that the fountain in Heritage Park be kept as a key view point. Tessa mentioned that this is being taken into account and that the CSB was assembled to include representation from interest groups that can provide insight into historic sightlines. Sightlines may be part of discussions at the next CSB meeting.
- **Opening at the South End of North Basin:** A member noted that, based on current project drawings, it appears that Marathon Park and the railroad bridge at the south end of the North Basin will remain unchanged. They asked if the opening at that location would need to be widened to accommodate tidal flow. Tessa responded that there are no plans at this time to change the railroad and adjacent pedestrian bridges.
- **Tidal Habitat:** A member provided their opinion that all the habitat within the 260-acre waterbody should be changed to tidal habitat and that upland islands would be hard to maintain. A follow-up question was asked as to whether the Middle Basin should continue to be dredged in the future. Tessa responded that a range of tidal habitat types will be established throughout the estuary, including tidal flats and focused riparian areas where possible. The estuary would not be dredged in the future after construction. Letting it fill in naturally will help reduce how much sediment flows into West Bay.
- **River Realignment:** A member noted that the proposed river channel seems to be a realignment from the existing channel. They feel that it may be a mistake to "tell the river where to go." Tessa responded that the team is being guided by the historic alignment of the river. The team is working with the Squaxin Island Tribe and Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife (WDFW) to ensure that habitat design goals and biological design criteria are supportive of a self-sustaining and native species-supportive river.

- **Percival Creek:** A member asked if the creek that flows into Percival Cove will be maintained. Tessa said there will still be a channel there--it is just difficult to see in the provided figure.

Fishing—Technical Design Discussion

Susan then led the CSB into the technical discussions, starting with a discussion around fishing. This was done with the full group to model how the subsequent breakout group discussion would be conducted. The project currently includes replacement of the fishing pier at the south end of the Middle Basin, just north of the I-5 underpass. An overview of general themes from this discussion is provided below.

- Members of the CSB generally felt that there would be community support for fishing in the estuary, though one member reminded the group there are existing fishing restrictions on coastal cutthroat and all wild salmon, and fishing could potentially impact salmon rearing in the estuary.[1]
- Members suggested there be considerations around safety for each of the user types in this space: anglers, pedestrians, and wildlife (railings to support fishing, back-casting zones to avoid conflicts with pedestrians, etc.).
- They suggested accessibility be at the forefront of design for the fishing pier (benches, wheelchair access, etc.), and that DES consider whether or not there will be enough parking for the additional water users.
- It was also noted that, while a fishing pier should be as close to the main channel as possible to allow for low-tide fishing, an obtrusive fishing pier might not be conducive to fish rearing and conservation efforts. Design suggestions included a pier parallel to shore and a "T-shaped" pier to spread people out.

The group was then divided into two small group sessions, where teams discussed the 5th Avenue Bridge experience in one session and in a subsequent session, focused on other elements of recreation. Each group had approximately 40 minutes to discuss these two topics. Overviews of key breakout group discussion points are provided below.

5th Avenue Bridge—Experience

John Williamson, Lead Bridge Architect with LMN Architects, provided a short overview of the importance of transportation connectivity and integration with Heritage Park, and provided some visual renderings of potential bridge alignments and designs.

The CSB was then asked to provide input on what would make the 5th Avenue Bridge crossing a success, important histories or aspects of Olympia to highlight, aesthetics, and pedestrian safety. An overview of general themes from these questions are provided below.

- Many members were interested in separated structures for pedestrians and vehicles.
- Members asked if there could be design compatibility between a boardwalk by the 5th Avenue Bridge and the boardwalks in the Middle Basin.

[1] A CSB member commented after the meeting that there has been a closure to fishing in Capitol Lake for years. New fishing regulations would be required, and the fishing pier would have to comply with state fishing regulations. The Tumwater hatchery would likely want input into the location of the access and regulations for seasons and any retention. Regulations and signage should feature those issues clearly.

- This space is important to bikes/pedestrians. It is important to improve and create a positive experience for these users. Lowering the pedestrian structure could keep pedestrians from being adjacent to vehicles. Consider grade separation, etc., to keep bikes and pedestrians safe.
- There is interest in complementing aesthetics of 4th Avenue, but 5th Avenue could signify a transition into the estuary.
- Consider materiality of the structures; wood might not be good for the pedestrian space given that it is slick in cold weather. The material choice for the pedestrian structure should be all-season.
- Histories told should consider and reflect multicultural use (tribal and salmon, maritime, Capitol Campus, Chinese community), and also convey the shared future that is improved through the estuary restoration.
- Art and narrative walking stories are important.
- Consider if there are design features that can support use of the natural environment such as birds, bats, and fish.
- People were excited by the idea of bump outs and the pause that they provide for Capitol views and salmon viewing.

Boardwalks—Technical Design Discussion

Steve Roelof, Landscape Architect with ESA and key member of the restoration design team, provided an overview of the proposed locations for boardwalks along the Middle and South Basin and described potential layout and design concepts.

The CSB was then asked to share input around considering active uses such as fishing on the boardwalk, boardwalk safety, and amenities to promote wildlife viewing. A summary of the general response themes from these questions is provided below.

- Will need to consider how the boardwalk is used (e.g., bikes or not, dogs or not, wide enough for everybody or should some uses be kept on Deschutes); and create separate areas for those using the boardwalks.
- Keep the boardwalk well used by people in a lot of ways and wide enough will help with safety and security; cameras too.
- Quiet natural viewing, low lighting on pathways, and handrail areas for birding will be nice.
- Non-slip surfaces and visibility of boardwalks from other places (e.g., parkway).
- Consider equipment to borrow or use for recreation (bird watching, fishing, boating).
- Consider seasonal interpretation to help know about the species seen at a time.
- Maintenance staff will be vital to maintain the heavily used structures.

Boat Launches—Technical Design Discussion

Steve explained that the project currently includes consideration of a hand-carried boat launch in Marathon Park. He described that this launch point would require prior boat knowledge and overview locations of nearby launch points. He overviewed types of boat launches being considered.

CSB members were asked to provide input on siting a boat launch, types of water craft anticipated, and accessibility considerations. An overview of general themes from these questions are provided below.

- Concerns around navigating a handheld boat in this tidal system – considerable risks.
- Boating considerations should include multiple put in and take out locations, with locking stations, such that there might be downstream take outs if you did get stuck.
- Important to coordinate with West Bay Park to consider boat launch opportunities there.
- Need for signage and awareness about tides and safety, how much time there really is for boating.
- Considerations for boating in the Middle Basin include safety for homeowners on the east side of the basin and whether boardwalks would make the space too narrow for boating.

Public Comment

Some comments were made during the presentation and are provided in Attachment 2. The public is encouraged to sign up for the project newsletter on the project website to learn about upcoming opportunities to provide input on the estuary restoration design.

Recap of Small Group Sessions

Susan asked the CSB members to provide feedback on the small group sessions.

- Appreciated the breakout time. Posting prompting questions allowed everyone to really delve into topics. Appreciated visual content to allow us to go into the details
- Stickies used during the meeting in Miro kept covering parts of the document, which made it hard to see.
- Enjoyed the smaller groups to allow for more comments to be made; it was easier to make and respond to comments
- Liked the sticky notes because it showed that the project team had heard our comments
- A CSB member encouraged others to review the Final EIS summary document, as there were a number of foundational questions asked during the meeting that can be answered in this document

Tessa reminded CSB members that this is the first of a series of meetings and that DES plans to hold several of these meetings throughout the design process. Next time the CSB meets, the project team will have a different set of questions and hopefully new content to move the conversation even deeper. She then provided a brief overview of what themes and comments were heard in the two bridge-focused small group sessions (see above for this summary; see attached for notes captured in the meetings).

Kate then provided an overview of what themes and comments were heard in the two recreation-focused breakout rooms relative to boardwalks and boating (see above for this summary; see attached for notes captured in the meetings).

Upcoming Meeting

Tessa reminded the CSB that DES is working closely with the Squaxin Island Tribe, City of Olympia, City of Tumwater Parks Department, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, and other entities to facilitate early coordination around restoration and the key project elements. In the

summer, the team will be prepared to talk about the estuary restoration with the CSB. The team will be working from now through middle of the year to complete conceptual design and will review stakeholder input, including that gathered in this meeting, as design develops.

Ann closed by thanking the CSB members for their time and focus on this important work. She reminded everyone that this project is transformative and is connecting our past, our present, and our future.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:30 PM.

Attachments

Attachment 1: Meeting Participants

CSB Members in Attendance:

- Anne Knight, Friends of Seattle's Olmsted Parks
- Bethany Roth, Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee
- Bill Robinson, North Capitol Campus Heritage Park Development Association
- Bob Holman, Capitol Lake Improvement and Protection Association
- Brenda McKey, South Sound Parent to Parent
- Casey Allen, Deschutes Estuary Restoration Team
- Chris McCabe, Olympia Yacht Club
- Howard Goldberg, South Capitol Neighborhood Association
- J Michelle Swope, Oly Women on the Fly
- John Dunlap, Mountaineers Olympia Sea Kayaking Committee
- Laurie Gneiding, Black Hills Audubon
- Stephanie Johnson, Gateways Public Art
- Steve Shanewise, Dual Estuary/Lake Idea
- Wade Stine, Olympia Downtown Alliance

CSB Members Not in Attendance:

- Bruce York, South Sound Group, Sierra Club
- Caroline Slagle, Evergreen State College
- Keylee Marineau, Thurston County Regional Housing Council
- Shannon Tiggs, Fiddlehead & Martin Marinas
- Tom Condon, Olympia School District
- Gene Angel, Thurston Economic Development Council

Deschutes Estuary Restoration Project Team:

- Ann Larson, DES
- Tessa Gardner-Brown, Floyd|Snider
- Kate Snider, Floyd|Snider
- Kristen Legg, Floyd|Snider
- Scott Stainer, KPFF
- Mark Steepy, KPFF
- Steve Roelof, ESA
- John Williamson, LMN Architects
- Hasti Afkam, LMN Architects
- Susan Hayman, Ross Strategic

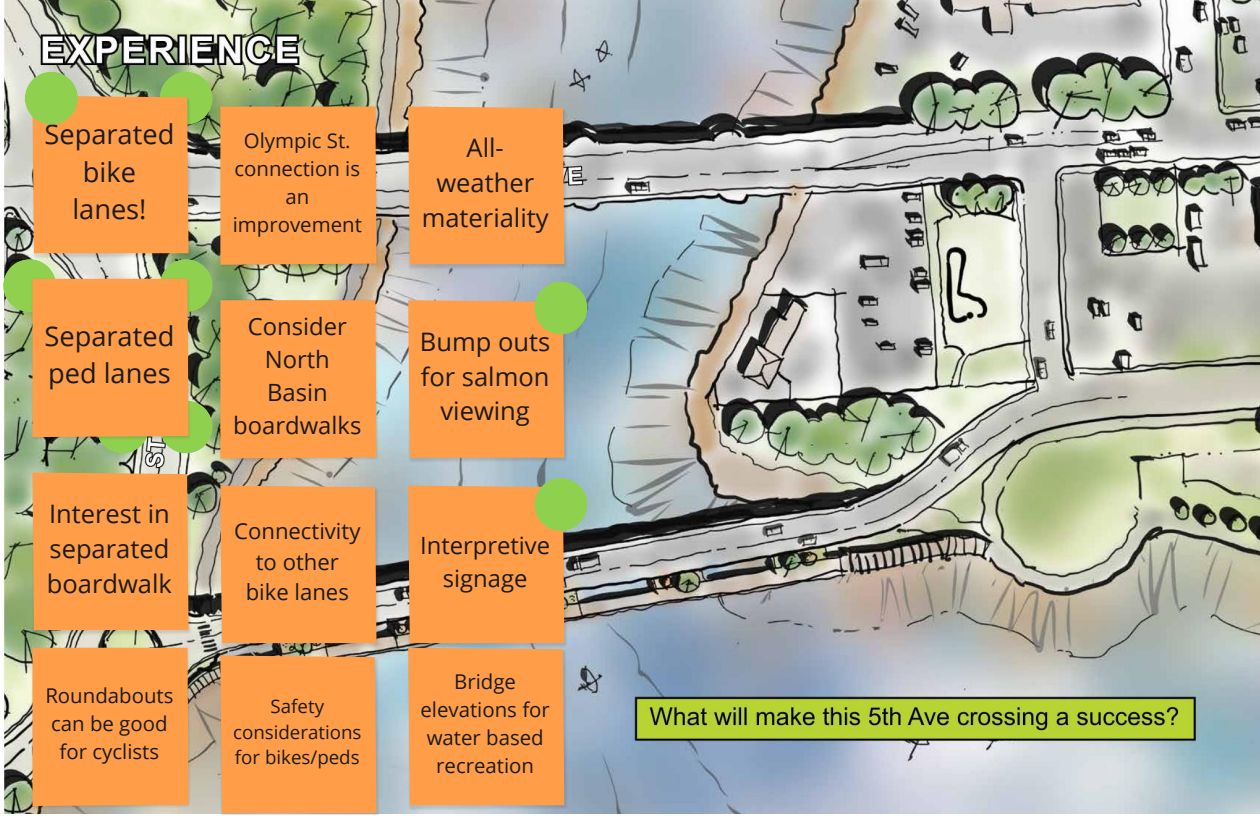
Attachments

Attachment 2: Public Comment

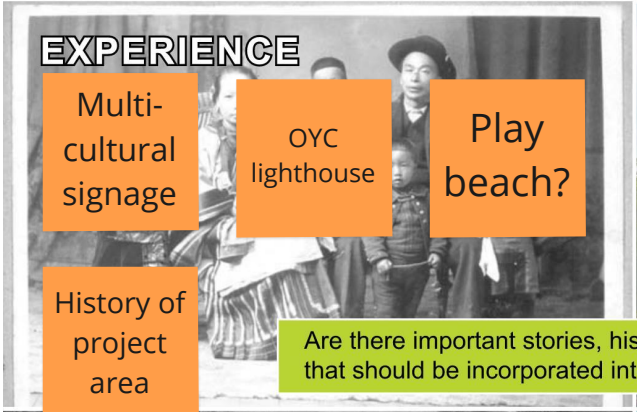
- How can we get materials presented today? *(Meeting materials will be posted to the website [linked here].)*
- How large would the water area be just south of the bridge at both high and low tide? Please compare it to the current size of the lake. *(A CSB member encouraged others to review the Final EIS summary document, as there were a number of foundational questions asked during the meeting that can be answered in this document.)*
- Consider that channel migration will be dynamic throughout the adjustment period. Dock location may become isolated or in harm's way. Dock on piers?
- What kind of material will the boardwalk be made out of? Concerns for durability, longevity, avoid warping, etc.
- Where does the money come from to pay for this to move forward on the timeline?
- We really hope that the 1 mile walkway around the whole water/ estuary area will be preserved
- Enlarged viewing areas on the bridge are important and pedestrian stopping/ viewing areas on the bridge

Attachments

Attachment 3: Materials Generated during Meeting


EXPERIENCE
Separated bike lanes!
Olympic St. connection is an improvement
All-weather materiality
Separated ped lanes
Consider North Basin boardwalks
Bump outs for salmon viewing
Interest in separated boardwalk
Connectivity to other bike lanes
Interpretive signage
Roundabouts can be good for cyclists
Safety considerations for bikes/peds
Bridge elevations for water based recreation
What will make this 5th Ave crossing a success?

EXPERIENCE

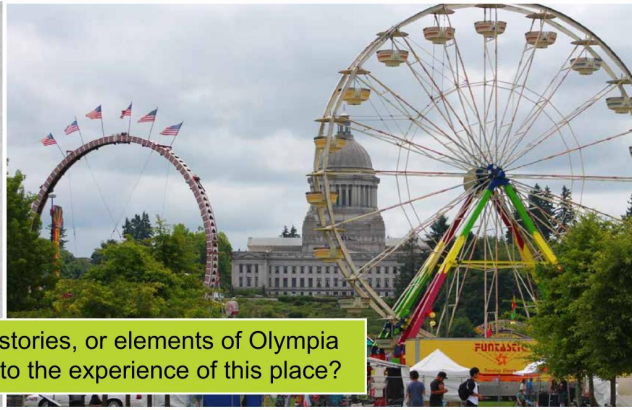


Multi-cultural signage

OYC lighthouse

Play beach?

History of project area



Are there important stories, histories, or elements of Olympia that should be incorporated into the experience of this place?

Importance of restoration

Story of our future

Chinese influence

Art to tell story

Sync with walking tour

Terminus of OR Trail

Prominence of E WA Butte

Interpretive center

EXPERIENCE

When you think of the bridge aesthetics, are there sources of inspiration that the design might consider? For example, the existing 4th Avenue bridge, iconic structures, natural elements of the estuary, the Capitol Campus, or other? We will be asking this question of the community and the City as well.

Nesting boxes

Night cameras

Kissing statue

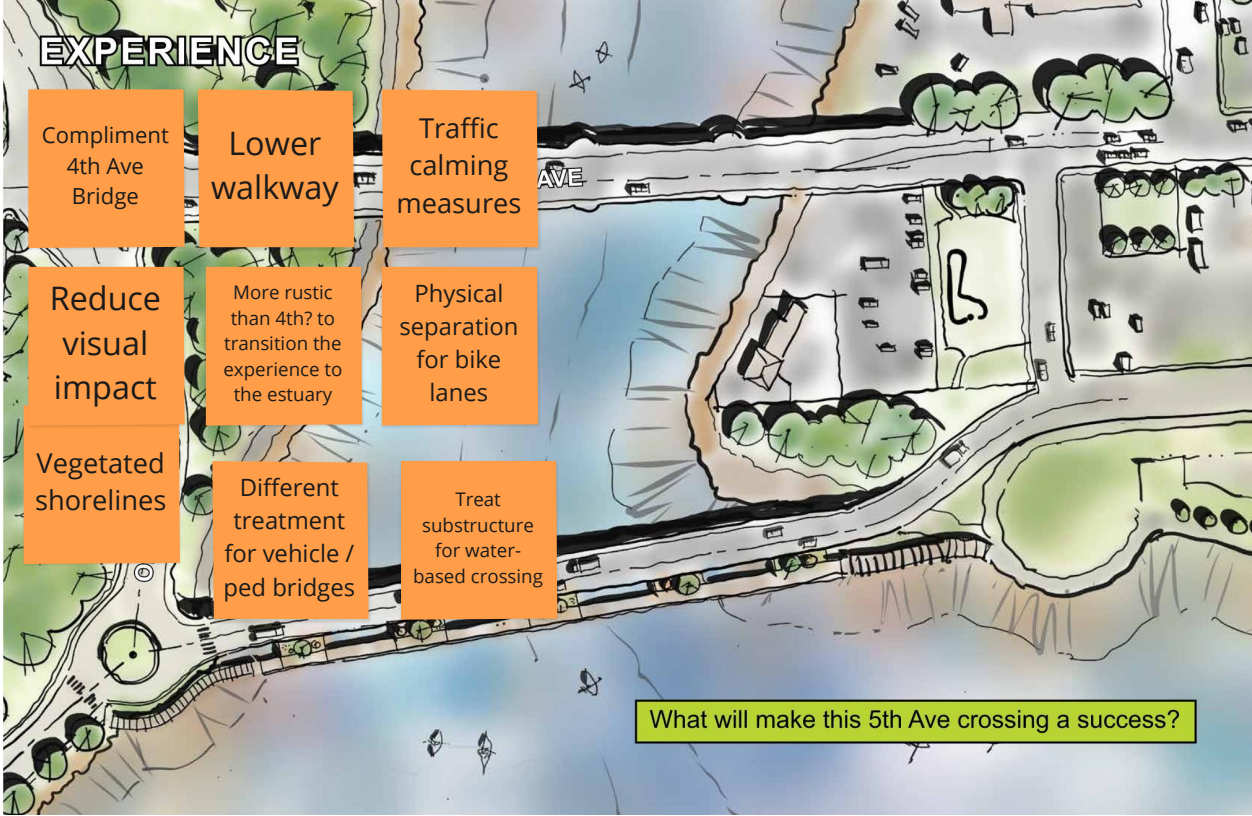
Car bridge and ped bridge could be different material/look

Features for native species

Tribal histories built into bridge

Compatibility with 4th Ave?

Representing connectivity! River/sound...


EXPERIENCE
Compliment 4th Ave Bridge
Lower walkway
Traffic calming measures
AVE
Reduce visual impact
More rustic than 4th? to transition the experience to the estuary
Physical separation for bike lanes
Vegetated shorelines
Different treatment for vehicle / ped bridges
Treat substructure for water-based crossing
What will make this 5th Ave crossing a success?

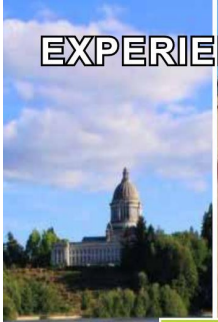
Are there important stories, histories, or elements of Olympia that should be incorporated into the experience of this place?

Significance of the Capitol

Salmon/ fishing stories

Historical sight lines

EXPERIENCE






When you think of the bridge aesthetics, are there sources of inspiration that the design might consider? For example, the existing 4th Avenue bridge, iconic structures, natural elements of the estuary, the Capitol Campus, or other? We will be asking this question of the community and the City as well.

Architectural marine elements

Separated bike/ped lanes

Improved crossings

Safe connectivity north to 4th

Remove impediments for bikes and peds

Importance of well-designed bike/ped

Lower or separate ped lane

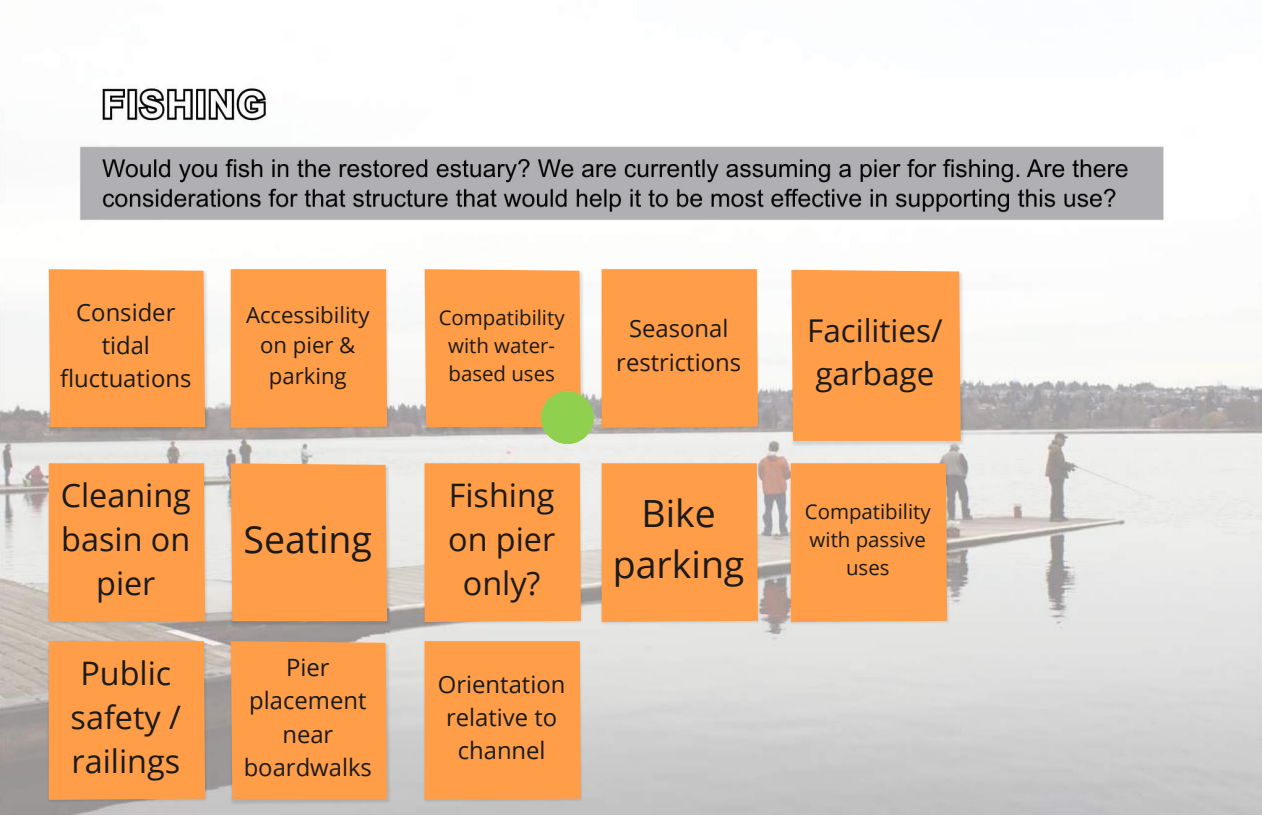
Ped lane and boardwalk design consistency

Signage placement to avoid conflict with capitol dome

Salmon viewing opportunities

FISHING

Would you fish in the restored estuary? We are currently assuming a pier for fishing. Are there considerations for that structure that would help it to be most effective in supporting this use?

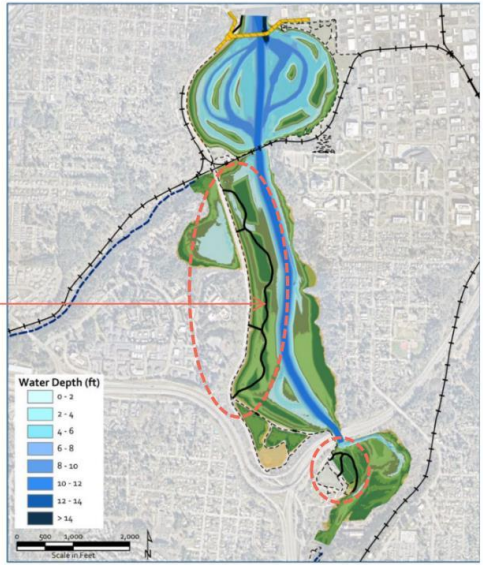


Boardwalks

- Proposed boardwalks in Middle Basin and South Basin

Boardwalk locations as shown in the EIS

trail contact south of I-5



BOARDWALKS

We have been assuming programming for boardwalks for passive use only. Should we be considering other programming, such as active uses like fishing?

boardwalks and fishing in different areas?

have room to stop and birdwatch, etc

Shade on hot days

quiet surface

space for bikes, dogs, etc

railings at comfortable height for scopes

public art locations - Stephanie

relationship to Deschutes sidewalk

narrow boardwalk - move along?

seating and interpretive signs

BOARDWALKS

How can we design the boardwalks in such a way that recreationalists feel safe? (lighting, emergency response, active uses like fishing, etc.)

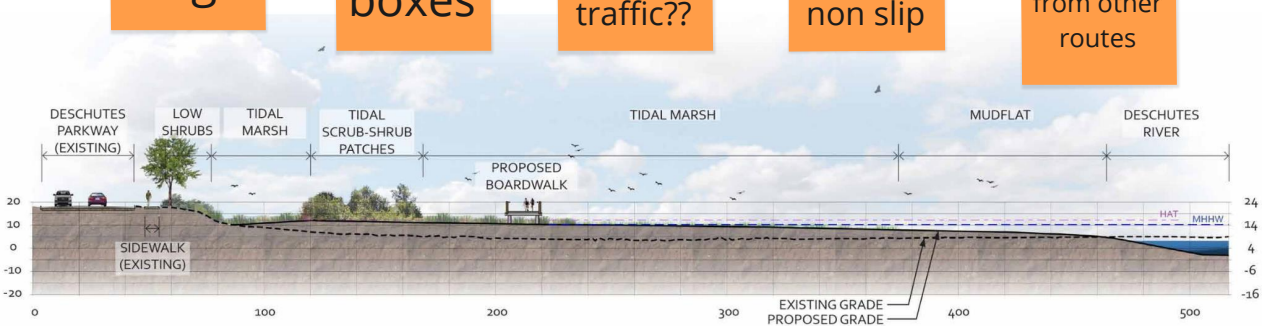
no dogs

call boxes

limit to just foot traffic??

surface that is non slip

visibility from other routes



BOAT LAUNCH

Is a hand-carried boat launch a valuable addition to the project and if so, what should the design team consider in terms of location, water levels, currents, and tides?

WOULD YOU USE BOAT LAUNCH, AND IF SO, FOR WHAT KIND OF VESSEL?

Dont remember boats before the dam

Safer for homeowners to not have boats?

Concern re get stuck in mudflat

Boats are going to launch no matter what

woodard bay boat launch too muddy

Boat launch close to channel

Surface is important - gravel?

A lot of people in the water if all boats

close middle basin to boats?

WHAT FEATURES FOR DIFFERENT USERS?

confined area between boardwalks and channel - safety concern

how much time really feasible for boating?

Beach area but not formal dock

boat in salt marsh to view wildlife, will not get out

sediment contamination

BOARDWALKS

We have been assuming programming for boardwalks for passive use only. Should we be considering other programming, such as active uses like fishing?

- if fishing designated areas only
- plan for bikes - separate lanes?
- 2 bikes to pass?
- not slippery
- school groups - wider
- meander rather than linear
- bump outs
- birds - seasonal changing signs
- no bikes - ped only
- separate fishing piers east from board

BOARDWALKS

How can we design the boardwalks in such a way that recreationalists feel safe? (lighting, emergency response, active uses like fishing, etc.)

a lot of people - heavily used

call boxes? everyone has phone?

lighting? on handrails

when and how much lighting

cameras with signage - someone watching

lighting is important

low lighting on pathway

but dont pollute area with light

BOARDWALKS

Are there specific amenities for the boardwalks that would best support wildlife viewing, the experience over the water, etc.?

bump outs

maintainence - keep to minimum need?

public scopes?

BOAT LAUNCH

Is a hand-carried boat launch a valuable addition to the project and if so, what should the design team consider in terms of location, water levels, currents, and tides?

gravel beach?

stuck in mud tide out?

build to get out far enough to not get stuck

gravel beach would need to be near channel

swantown "soft dock"

signage re: tides

boat lock-ups downstream

reduce overwater structures

West Bay park better location - parking, potential kayak rental

BOAT LAUNCH

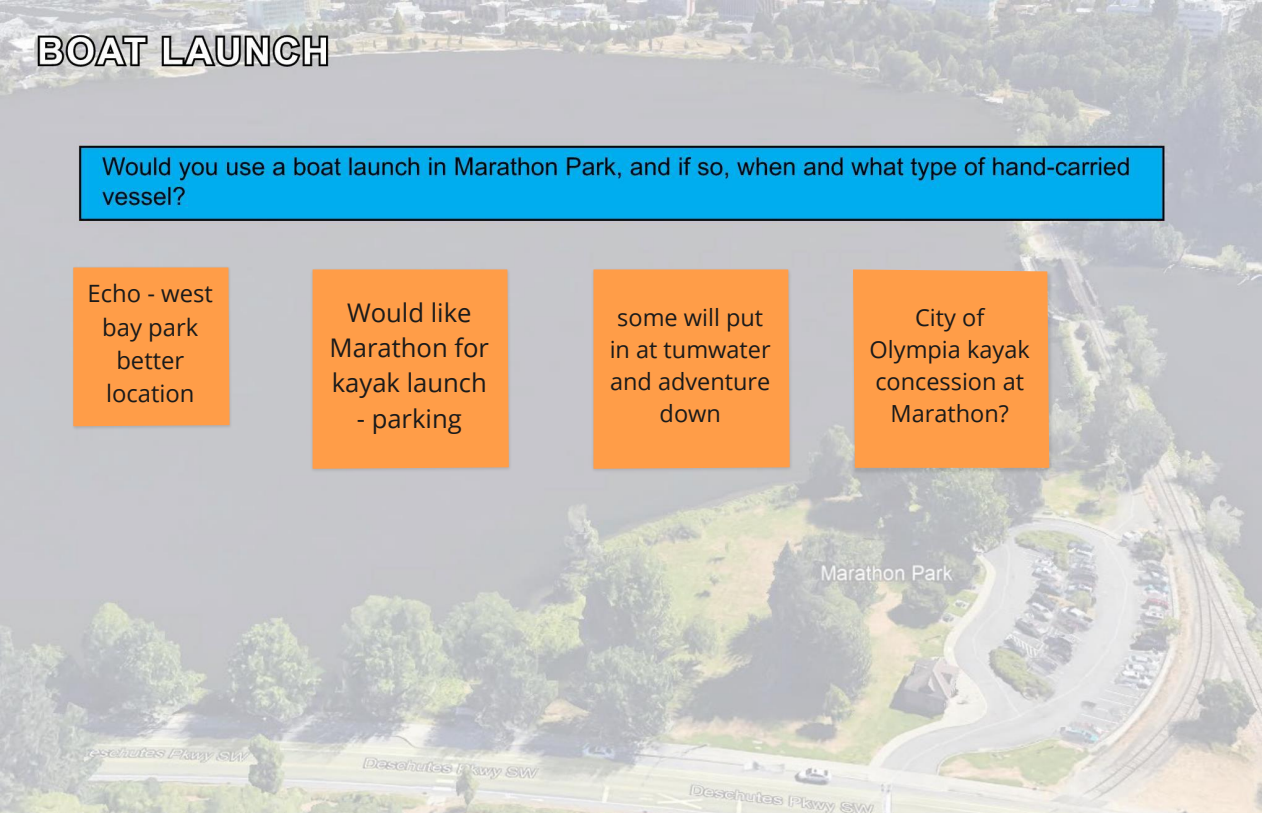
Would you use a boat launch in Marathon Park, and if so, when and what type of hand-carried vessel?

Echo - west bay park better location

Would like Marathon for kayak launch - parking

some will put in at tumwater and adventure down

City of Olympia kayak concession at Marathon?



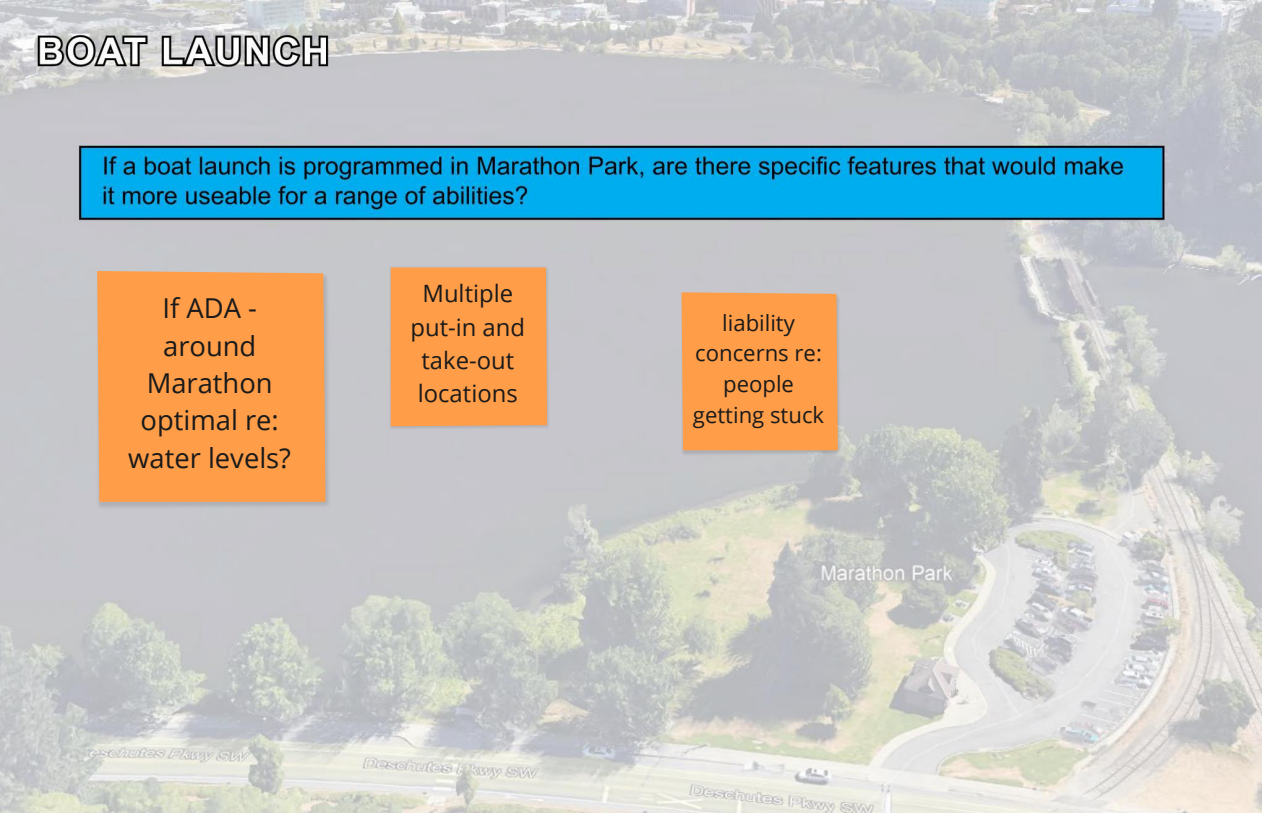
BOAT LAUNCH

If a boat launch is programmed in Marathon Park, are there specific features that would make it more useable for a range of abilities?

If ADA - around Marathon optimal re: water levels?

Multiple put-in and take-out locations

liability concerns re: people getting stuck



ACCESSIBILITY

What kinds of design features would improve the use of recreational features for people with ranging abilities?

usually people drive to the park (or adjacent employees) - parking?

minimize steps and curbs

reduce impervious, but have smooth pathways - "rugged" equipment available to borrow?

Discuss liability issues with Stephanie J re mudflat safety - re Squaxin