

Columbia River CROSSING

Safety in the I-5 Project Area

While traffic jams between Portland and Vancouver may have triggered the Columbia River Crossing project, safety may be the most compelling reason to improve this stretch of I-5. More congestion = more collisions

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It's common sense: more cars on the road mean more collisions.

- Today, about 130,000 vehicles cross the I-5 bridge every day; in 2020 it will be 175,000
- Accidents are more than twice as likely to occur between 6 to 9 a.m. and 4 to 6 p.m. when there are more cars on the road.
- With congestion growing each year, the number of accidents will continue to go up

Outdated roadway design causes more accidents

Safety hazards are due, in large part, to outdated roadway design. Closely spaced interchanges, short on and off ramps, inadequate space for merging, limited sight distance, and narrow shoulders all create safety risks. And crash data show there is a strong correlation between these substandard features and the number and type of collisions in the project area.

- Weaving, merging and diverging on I-5 south between SR 500 and Fourth Plain Blvd and at the SR 14 due to a short acceleration lane result in more accidents.
- Lack of room at the on- and off-ramps, and short acceleration and deceleration lanes contribute to rear-end and side-swipe collisions at the Hayden Island and Lombard ramps and the Victory Blvd interchange.
- Rear-end collisions account for about 65% of all accidents; sideswipes are about 14% of the total.
- About 34% of all crashes in the project area result in injuries.

Accidents are 3 to 4 times more likely when the lift span is up

During bridge lifts, motorists traveling southbound in Vancouver are 4 times more likely to be in an accident, and northbound motorists in Portland are 3 times more likely to have an accident, compared to when the lift span is not raised.

More truck accidents happen during midday

Because more trucks are on the road in the middle of the day, there are also more truck-related accidents during that time.

Columbia River Crossing Area Safety Facts

From 2000 to 2004:

- There were 2,204 crashes (1,687 on highway, 517 on ramps) That averages more than one per day
- In Oregon, the number of northbound crashes was about double that of southbound crashes
- On the Washington side, the number of southbound crashes was about double that of northbound crashes because motorists are traveling at faster speeds on I-5 southbound toward the bridge (Vancouver side), collisions there are more serious.

Sources: Washington State Department of Transportation Collision Data and Analysis Branch, Oregon Department of Transportation Crash Analysis and Reporting Unit



Washington State
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