

Keeping the Connection Vital: The Columbia River Crossing Project

Columbia River CROSSING



Bridge span is floated into place by barge during construction of the 1917 Interstate Bridge
Oregon Historical Society, OrHi 101203

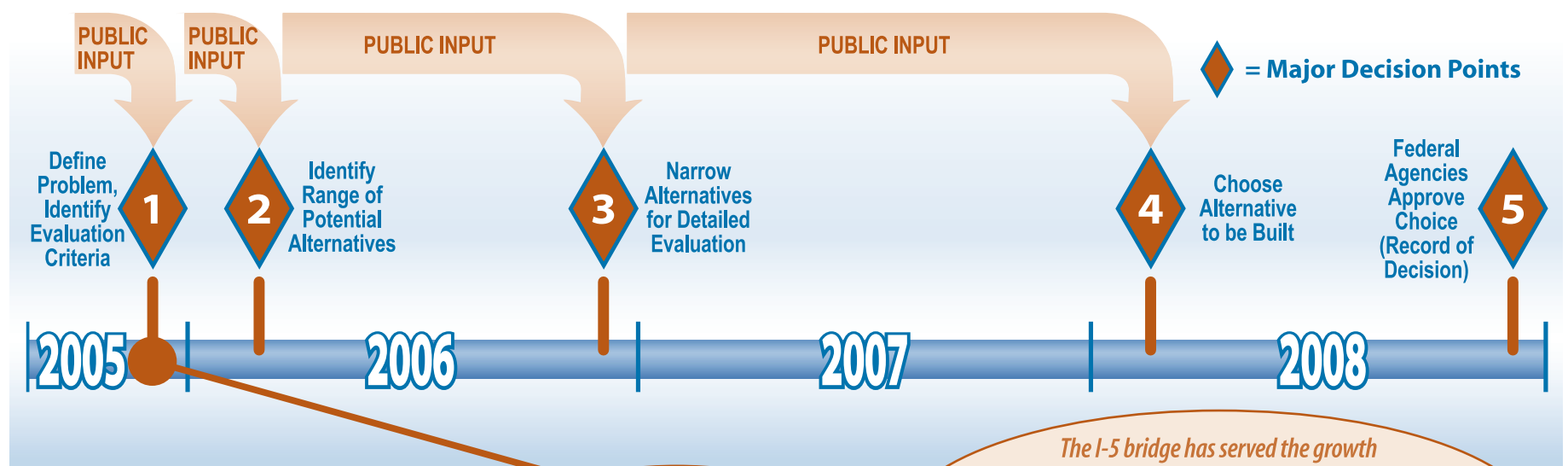
Where We Are

The Columbia River Crossing project is moving along. There are many opportunities to provide input on issues to be considered and potential solutions, as shown in the timeline below. You can provide input through public meetings, the project Web Site, the project Task Force, and public hearings on the preferred alternative. Sign up on our mailing list to stay informed (through e-mail notification or mailed material) about when and how to participate or send us a comment anytime. Visit the project Web site or send your address to the project office listed on the back panel of this newsletter.

My priority is getting our regional partners to embrace building a bridge not just for cars, but for pedestrians, bicyclists and a major form of transit."

Oregon Congressman Earl Blumenauer
The Oregonian, May 1, 2005

Project Schedule



The I-5 bridge has served the growth of the regional economy well. However, it is now a clear hindrance to the cost-effective movement of freight, commerce, and the labor force necessary for a vibrant metropolitan economy. We need 21st century infrastructure to make that happen and that is what the Columbia River Crossing project is about.

Bart Phillips, President
Columbia River Economic Development Council

Bridge To Our Collective Past

A massive traffic jam at the Columbia River steam ferry during the 1905 Portland Lewis and Clark Centennial Exposition sparked the first public debate about the need for a bridge linking Oregon and Washington. In 1914, with bi-state local support, the Oregon and Washington state legislatures approved the sale of bonds to fund such a bridge, and construction began a year later. Up to that time, the only way to cross the river had been by ferry. The new bridge opened on February 15, 1917, amid much fanfare:

"Let us consider this bridge not only a necessary thing of great utility, but a monument commemorating the unity of interests between the states of Oregon and Washington," said Rufus C. Holman, Chair of the Interstate Bridge Committee and the Multnomah County Commission. "This is an enterprise demonstrating what we can do by cooperation."

The new bridge was dubbed "the last unfinished link in the Pacific Highway...[creating] one unbroken artery

"This is an enterprise demonstrating what we can do by cooperation."

—Rufus C. Holman, Chair of the Interstate Bridge Committee and the Multnomah County Commission, 1917

of commerce, extending from British Columbia to the southern line of the United States..." (*The Vancouver Columbian*, February 14, 1917).

On hand for the Valentine's Day dedication ceremony were more than 40,000 guests, including famed entrepreneur Sam Hill and other local, city, and state dignitaries.

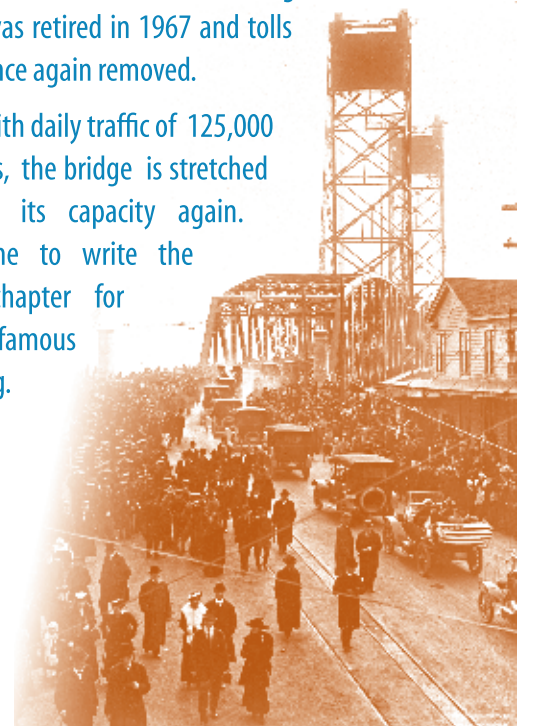
When the Interstate Bridge first opened, travelers paid a 5-cent toll to cross it. A streetcar line shared the roadway with two lanes for cars and carriages. The bridge was heavily used and toll revenues helped pay off 85 percent of the original \$1,683,000 bond within just 12 years. In 1929,

ownership of the bridge was transferred from Multnomah and Clark Counties to the two states; tolls were removed, and the remaining debt paid off with tax dollars.

In 1936, the bridge carried 13,100 vehicles each day; by 1950, that number had jumped to 30,747. A dramatic increase in marine traffic also required more bridge lifts, making traffic even worse. A second parallel drawbridge

was constructed in 1958 to meet the growing demand; and after refurbishment of the old bridge, tolls were reinstated in 1960 to pay off the new bonds (20 cents for cars, 40 cents for light trucks, 60 cents for heavy trucks and buses). The \$14.5 million bridge bond was retired in 1967 and tolls were once again removed.

Now, with daily traffic of 125,000 vehicles, the bridge is stretched beyond its capacity again. It's time to write the next chapter for this famous crossing.



MAKING A DECISION

The Columbia River Crossing project has five major decision points between now and the end of 2008. At each of these decision points will involve public input, resulting in a “context sensitive solution” that is:

- Safe
- Financially feasible
- Responsive to community values
- Sensitive to the natural and community resources

Who Is Involved?

A project of this size and complexity must, of necessity, bring together many groups with a wide range of interests. Each of these groups has a unique role to play in the decision-making process. Some provide the technical data needed to develop and analyze alternatives while others help compare and choose alternatives.

Project Development

A project development team is responsible for day-to-day project management. Working groups will assist this team with specific issues such as freight, public involvement, and project financing.

Regional Partners

Advises Project Development Team and assists with project development. Includes major public agencies with transportation jurisdiction in the project area:

- Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT)
- Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT)
- Southwest Washington Regional Transportation Council (RTC)
- Metro
- C-TRAN
- TriMet
- City of Vancouver
- City of Portland
- Clark County
- Multnomah County
- Port of Vancouver
- Port of Portland

Recommendations

Task Force

A 39-member group of representatives from a broad cross section of the Oregon and Washington communities, including public agencies, businesses, civic organizations, neighborhoods, and freight, commuter, and environmental groups. Provides recommendations to the Project Sponsors Council.

Decision Making

Project Sponsors Council

Makes decisions at each decision point based on recommendations from the Task Force, public input, and advice from Project Development Team. Includes:

- ODOT
- WSDOT
- Metro
- RTC
- TriMet
- C-TRAN
- City of Portland
- City of Vancouver
- Federal Highway Administration (non-voting)
- Federal Transit Agency (non-voting)

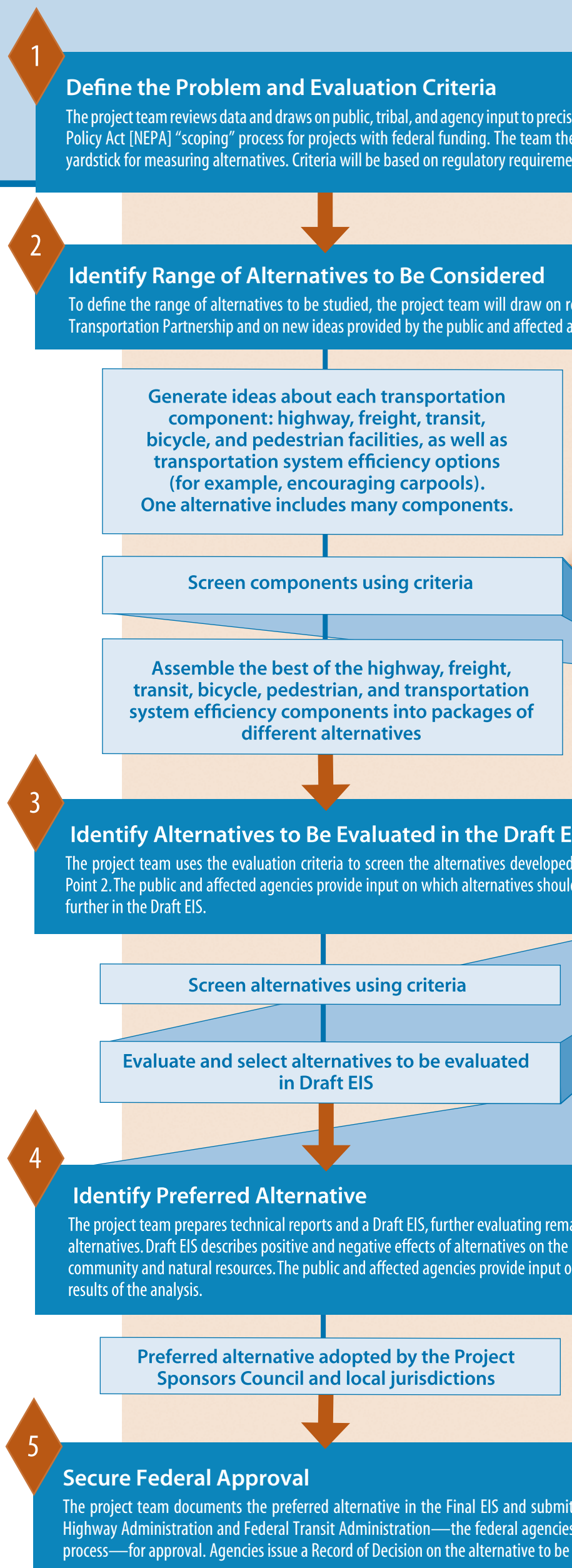
Approvals

Bi-State Permitting and Regulatory Group

Coordinates and collaborates to streamline regulatory reviews and permitting. Group includes federal, state, and local agencies responsible for protecting air, water, wildlife, and cultural resources.

Federal Highway Administration and Federal Transit Administration

Co-lead agencies for the National Environmental Policy Act process that governs proposed actions requiring federal funding, federal permits, or federal approvals. Will sign the Environmental Impact Statement and Record of Decision.



007. Reaching each of

ely define the problem. This public dialogue is part of the National Environmental
 en develops criteria for evaluating various alternatives; these criteria will be the
 nts and community values and concerns.

ecommendations from the I-5 Trade and
 agencies.

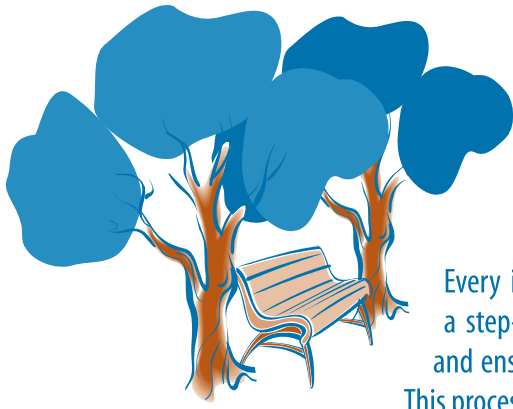
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◆ = Decision Point

PREFERRED
 ALTERNATIVE



What is an “Environmental Impact Statement”?

Every infrastructure project receiving federal funds must follow a step-by-step process to minimize effects on the environment and ensure that all reasonable options are thoroughly considered.

This process, laid out by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), involves systematic technical analysis and thorough public discussion of solutions and their positive and negative effects on natural and community resources. The analysis includes consideration of the short- and long-term effects of the project, from construction through operation. It also details the effects of alternatives on people who live or work in the project area, users of the facilities, and the broader community. Reports document effects on:

- Traffic and transportation
- Communities
- Economy
- Cultural and historic resources
- Visual resources
- Air quality
- Noise
- Water quality
- Fish, wildlife, and vegetation
- Geology and soils
- Land use

These technical analyses are summarized in a draft “Environmental Impact Statement,” or Draft EIS, that describes the effects of proposed solutions or alternatives as well as plans to minimize negative effects. The goal is to identify the alternative that best addresses the defined problem while striving to avoid adverse impacts; if adverse impacts can’t be avoided, the second option is to minimize and mitigate for these impacts.



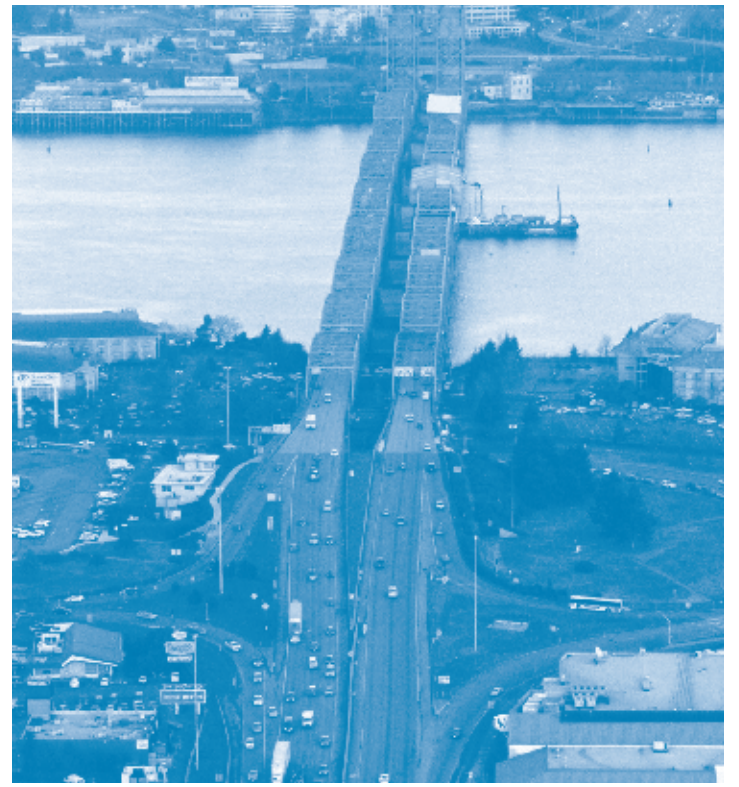
Opening Day, Interstate Bridge,
 February 14, 1917
 Oregon Historical Society, OrHi 11768
 (tinted and cropped)



How You Can Make a Difference

Your opinion matters—take our online survey, available on the project Web site through November 20. The next step will be to gather ideas for solutions. Look for announcements for public meetings early next year.

- Get “notified” by signing up for automated Web notices about meetings, documents, and new surveys available to the public
- If you haven’t already done so, sign up on our mailing list. Use the project Web site or send your address to the project office, “Attention: Mailing List”
- Request a speaker for your community group or organization to discuss the project (sign up on our Web site or call the project office)



I-5 and the Interstate Bridge from Jantzen Beach in Oregon

CONTACT US

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How Decisions will be Made



Sponsored by the Oregon Department of Transportation and the Washington State Department of Transportation in partnership with the Federal Highway Administration and Federal Transit Administration

Solutions to I-5 Bridge Congestion: What Do YOU Think?

It’s time to look at ways to relieve congestion on I-5 between Portland and Vancouver—and the area’s major transportation agencies have come together to do just that. The Columbia River Crossing project is aimed at improving the mobility, reliability, and accessibility for automobile, freight, transit, bicycle, and pedestrian users of the I-5 corridor from approximately State Route 500 in Vancouver to approximately Columbia Boulevard in Portland. This project will benefit the region’s economy and our community well into the future.

Over the next year, we will develop and evaluate alternatives that include highway, high capacity, freight, transit, bicycle, and pedestrian components. We invite you to be part of the process of selecting the best solutions. This newsletter describes the steps in that process as well as the roles of various project teams. Find out how to get involved, and check out our Web site to keep up with the latest on this exciting project!