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I-5 Willamette River Bridge
Eugene & Springfield

Oregon Department of Transportation

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Introduction

April 20, 2009

Construction of the Interstate 5 Bridge over the Willamette River will begin in May.

Contractors will begin by working on the south bank of the bridge. During the first six months, they will construct a work bridge in the water, demolish the decommissioned bridge and widen the southbound on-ramp from Franklin Boulevard. Detour paths will be constructed in the Whilamut Natural Area to ensure bicyclists and pedestrians safe mobility around the bridge construction areas on the north and south banks of the river. ODOT has also installed kiosks in the parks to inform path users of the detours. The kiosks will be updated and modified on a regular basis as detours change throughout construction of the four-year project.

Motorists will see minimal impacts on I-5 and occasional closures to Franklin Boulevard and the southbound on-ramp from Franklin Boulevard.

This packet includes a general overview of the project and a summary of agency and community coordination.

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Project Information Paper
I-5 Willamette River Bridge – Eugene and Springfield

Updated April 20, 2009

Project location

- Located on Interstate 5 at milepost 192.7 where it crosses the Willamette River between the cities of Eugene and Springfield.

Project purpose and need

- Bridge inspection reports in 2002 showed shear cracks growing quicker than expected throughout the reinforced concrete beams supporting the bridge deck. Traffic has been diverted to a temporary detour structure until a new bridge can be constructed.
- The design phase of the project is under way and will continue while construction begins in May 2009. The purpose of the project is to improve safety and maintain connectivity and mobility for all users of I-5 over the Willamette River and the Eugene/Springfield metropolitan area.

Construction overview

- Construction will have minor impacts on vehicle traffic. Bicycle and pedestrian path users may be impacted though signed detours will be provided.
- ODOT is designing the new bridges wide enough to eventually carry up to six-lanes of traffic (three-lanes in each direction) to meet the projected long-term traffic needs. The new bridges will be striped to carry two lanes in each direction, matching the existing alignment of I-5. Any future widening of I-5 would require a full environmental review.
- The new bridge design will accommodate potential future configurations of Franklin Boulevard, to the extent feasible.
- Lane County and the cities of Eugene and Springfield are active participants in the process through participation on the Project Development Team.
- To engage the community, several public meetings are planned. In addition, a Community Advisory Group has been established involving representatives from local neighborhoods,

recreation groups, Chambers of Commerce and the University of Oregon. CAG meetings are open to the public and announced through the city Web sites and the *Register-Guard.*

Cost estimate

- The project is funded at $150 million for construction.
- Funding sources are Oregon Transportation Investment Act and Federal SAFETEA-LU (Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users) earmark funds.

Key project milestones

- Environmental Assessment process: 2005-2008.
- Final Design and Permitting: 2008-2009.
- Construction: Spring 2009 to Winter 2012.

For more information or to schedule a meeting with your organization, contact:

- Megan Banks, Public Involvement Manager, (541) 682-7413; mbanks@lcog.org.
- Jyll Smith, ODOT Bridge Delivery Unit, Public Affairs Specialist, (503) 986-3985, jyll.e.smith@odot.state.or.us.

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Agency and Community Coordination

April 2009

The Willamette River Bridge project in Eugene and Springfield signifies a movement forward, an opportunity to engage and build bridges with the community.

The WRB project is doing more than just building a new bridge; the project will leave the surrounding area in better condition than before construction. The project is impacting three parks, the historic millrace, commuters who utilize the bike paths and countless park users.

A 10-member Community Advisory Group has been instrumental in developing the project goals and objectives. The group provided input and recommendations on the preferred bridge type and will continue to help shape the project through final design and construction. A member of the CAG is also a voting member on the Project Development Team. The PDT is the main decision-making body for the project, and includes representatives of ODOT, FHWA, the cities of Eugene and Springfield, Lane County and the CAG.

ODOT is extremely thankful to the hundreds of hours of volunteer time that has already been devoted by the residents and design professionals of Eugene and Springfield on this important project.

Coordination with the cities of Springfield and Eugene

Park impacts and improvements

To complete the project, construction crews will occupy part of the Whilamut Natural Area of Alton Baker Park west of I-5 for about three years. Contractors will use approximately two acres of the park as a staging area and about one mile of an existing paved path (former North Walnut Road) to access the staging area and project site. Crews will also use 770 feet of a paved path parallel to I-5 for access. This path and a parallel running path will be closed to park users during construction, but temporary detours for both paths will be built west of the staging area.

ODOT has installed kiosks throughout the park to inform path users of detour routes. These will be continuously updated as detours change throughout construction.

An agreement with Eugene Parks and Open Space defines ODOT's usage of the park and requirements to minimize and mitigate park impacts. Upon completion of the project, ODOT

contractors will have restored occupied areas, repaved utilized paths and completed many other improvements to the parks. In addition, the city will own additional park land in west Eugene provided by ODOT as compensation for the temporary impacts to the Whilamut Natural Area.

ODOT will not use the park on the Springfield side of the project, but will improve the bike path through the Eastgate Woodlands. ODOT has coordinated closely with the Willamalane Park and Recreation District.

Historic Eugene millrace

The millrace structure beneath the southern end of the I-5 bridges is a significant historical resource and is eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places. The National Historic Preservation Act requires that impacts to the millrace be avoided wherever possible and reduced where necessary.

The project team will work to make the millrace more visible as a historic resource and create new pathways to improve access for closer viewing. During public outreach events, the team will provide information about the millrace while soliciting photographs, documents, and oral history from the public to fill in gaps in the millrace history. The contractors will incorporate information about structure into interpretive displays to be installed as part of the final site restoration.

Coordination with the community

Public involvement

There have been many touch points for public outreach and involvement for the I-5 Willamette River Bridge project, including:

- Newsletters and a project Web site to provide information.
- Open house meetings to provide project information and solicit public input.
- An online survey soliciting input about the bridge type.
- A presence in the Whilamut Natural Area to describe upcoming detours to park trails.
- Distribution of the Environmental Assessment, a public hearing on the EA, and opportunities to provide written and oral comments on the EA. Thirty individuals and agencies submitted comments on the EA. All comments were reviewed and considered by ODOT. The Revised Environmental Assessment contains revisions to information presented in the EA that have been made in response to public comments.

Representatives from ODOT and the project team have also made a number of presentations and briefings to local community and governmental groups on request. Topics included general information about the project as well as more area specific items of concern such as sound walls and bike-pedestrian pathway connections. The presentations to groups included:

- Harlow Neighbors.

- Laurel Hill Valley Citizens Association.
- Local chapter of the American Institute of Architects.
- Springfield City Council.
- Eugene City Council.
- Lane County Board of Commissioners.
- Metropolitan Policy Committee.

Aesthetic design

The CAG and PDT have developed a theme for the design discussion to help guide the work of the bridge design team as well as local artists and architects. "Whilamut Passage" (pronounced "wheel-a-moot") recognizes the unique setting of the bridge in the Whilamut Natural Area, a place of historic and environmental significance. The setting is also a transportation hub of bicycle, pedestrian, rail, waterway and highway traffic. Design experts continue to work together to ensure that the bridge structure and environment fit together under this theme.

In late 2008, ODOT sought the help of local architects, artists, landscape architects, structural engineers and transportation experts to converge around design themes for the bridge. The local chapter of American Institute of Architects took on the project as a public service and for professional development. The AIA formed a steering committee to work intensively on both the process and the product.

In February 2009, design professionals met in workshops to make the proposed Willamette River Bridge and its surroundings memorable, meaningful, and truly representative of Springfield and Eugene. They created actionable ideas that could be applied above and below the deck of the Willamette River Bridges. The CAG and PDT will continue to work with the design experts to refine and implement these ideas.

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Frequently Asked Questions

April 2009

What are the benefits of the project?

The new bridge will improve mobility, connectivity and safety for drivers on Interstate 5. It will also improve the regional transportation system. The proposed bridges will be modern facilities that meet long-term traffic demands and allow for future expansion of Franklin Boulevard, I-5 and the railroad. The proposed project will reduce the number of bridge piers in the Willamette River and surrounding areas, diminishing impacts on the river environment, wildlife and park users.

Why is ODOT replacing the bridge rather than repairing it?

While repairing the I-5 bridge would have cost about $50 million, it would have required an estimated $50,000 per year in ongoing maintenance. In addition, ODOT would not have been able to replace the substandard shoulders that keep disabled vehicles from pulling out of the travel lanes in an emergency.

Traffic volumes are projected to require three lanes in each direction of I-5 in this area within 20 years. Even if the old bridge were repaired now, ODOT would need to replace it in 20 years at an estimated construction cost of $350 million.

Replacing the old bridge now is projected to cost about $150 million for construction. It will allow contractors to build a wider bridge that will provide adequate shoulders and capacity needed for the future.

ODOT is designing the new bridges wide enough to eventually carry up to six-lanes of traffic (three-lanes in each direction) to meet the projected long-term traffic needs. The new bridges will be striped to carry two lanes in each direction, matching the existing alignment of I-5. Any future widening of I-5 would require a full environmental review.

How was the deck arch design chosen?

The decision to build a deck-arch bridge for the I-5 crossing over the Willamette River follows nearly two years of discussion and relationship-building with residents and local government

officials in Eugene and Springfield, along with full consideration of design opportunities and constraints.

ODOT's goal is to strike a balance between design characteristics of highways and bridges and an affordable budget that responsibly uses transportation funding. Since these discussions began, the costs of bridge materials such as asphalt, concrete and steel have increased beyond projections. As a result, a preliminary cost estimate for a through-arch bridge recommended in a community survey is more than $20 million over the project budget. This means ODOT simply cannot find a fiscally responsible way to build a through-arch bridge. After revisiting bridge choices that fit the project budget, and considering community input, ODOT chose an option with arches under the deck. The deck-arch bridge, with its graceful curves and attractive profile, strikes a balance between a distinctive design and economic reality.