



# Washington State Legislature

John A. Cherberg Building  
PO Box 40466  
Olympia, WA 98504-0466  
(360) 786-7400

## Joint Oregon-Washington Legislative Action Committee

John L. O'Brien Building  
PO Box 40600  
Olympia, WA 98504-0600  
(360) 786-7155

To Members of the Washington State Legislature:

Pursuant to RCW 47.01.505(2)(h)<sup>1</sup>, the following information constitutes our report regarding the progress of the Joint Oregon-Washington Legislative Action Committee and its work to advance the project to build a new Interstate 5 bridge spanning the Columbia River. We were directed to submit this report in the 2022 enacted transportation budget, section 704 of ESSB 5689. We hope you find this information useful.

The Joint Oregon-Washington Legislative Action Committee (JOWLAC), intended to be comprised of legislators from both Washington and Oregon, was established in legislation enacted in 2017 (SSB 5806). Although Oregon legislators did not formally join the JOWLAC, they have met as a separate committee in joint meetings with the JOWLAC. The JOWLAC is intended to, among other things, work with the Departments of Transportation and Transportation Commissions of both Oregon and Washington, as well as stakeholders, to begin a process toward project development regarding a replacement bridge over the Columbia River. Additionally, various legislative oversight functions regarding project development are described in the enabling legislation.

The Interstate Bridge Replacement (IBR) Program is jointly led by the Oregon and Washington Departments of Transportation under the direction of each respective state's executives, and is staffed primarily by a Program Administrator and ODOT/WSDOT employees. The information in this report is based on what the IBR Program team has provided to the JOWLAC, including the Modified Locally Preferred Alternative Recommendation copied below.

### **Committee Meetings - 2022**

The following is a list of dates the Committee met with its Oregon counterparts regarding the Interstate Bridge Replacement (IBR) process during 2022, with Web links to the applicable meeting agendas:

- [January 24](#)
- [March 23](#)
- [April 21](#)
- [May 6](#)
- [May 20](#)
- [June 17](#)
- [July 21](#)

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<sup>1</sup> (h) The Washington members of the joint Oregon-Washington legislative action committee shall report back to the Washington state legislature, by August 1, 2022, regarding the progress of the committee and its work to advance the project to build a new Interstate 5 bridge spanning the Columbia river. The report must include a description of the locally preferred alternative ultimately identified as part of the interstate bridge replacement project.

**Description of the Modified Locally Preferred Alternative (as recommended by the IBR Program - a PDF version is attached and is also available in the meeting materials for the [June 17, 2022, meeting](#))**

MODIFIED LOCALLY PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE RECOMMENDATION

MAY 27, 2022

After regional support is reached on a Modified Locally Preferred Alternative for the Interstate Bridge Replacement (IBR) Program, the program commits to continuing work with the partner agencies and community to identify and refine program elements that have yet to be finalized. The IBR Program recommends the following language for the Modified LPA:

1. A replacement of the current I-5 bridge with a seismically sound bridge.
2. A commitment to increase and implement attractive transit options across the Columbia River by supporting a variety of transit services that meet the needs of customers traveling between varied markets through:
  - i. Continuation of C-TRAN express bus service from markets north of the Bridge Influence Area (BIA) to the downtown Portland area utilizing new bus on shoulder facilities, where available, within the BIA.
  - ii. Continuation of CTRAN's current and future Bus Rapid Transit lines as described in adopted regional plans and known as the Vine.
  - iii. New Light Rail Transit (LRT) service as the preferred mode for the dedicated High-Capacity Transit improvement within the BIA.
  - iv. An alignment of LRT that begins with a connection at the existing Expo Center LRT station in Portland, OR, extends north, with a new station at Hayden Island, continues across the Columbia River on a new I-5 bridge, and generally follows I-5 with an interim Minimum Operable Segment not extending north of E. Evergreen Boulevard, in Vancouver, WA. There will be multiple stations in the City of Vancouver to be decided by the Vancouver City Council in consultation with C-TRAN, the Port of Vancouver, and Tri-Met.
3. Active transportation and multimodal facilities that adhere to universal design principles to facilitate safety and comfort for all ages and abilities. Exceptional regional and bi-state multi-use trail facilities and transit connections will be created within the BIA. Opportunities will be identified to enhance active transportation facilities, with specific emphasis on local and cross-river connections between the region's Columbia River Renaissance Trail and the 40-mile Loop.
4. The construction of a seismically sound replacement crossing for North Portland Harbor Bridge with three through lanes, northbound and southbound.
5. The construction of three through lanes northbound and southbound on I-5 throughout the BIA.
6. The inclusion of one auxiliary lane northbound and one southbound between Marine Drive in Portland and E. Mill Plain Boulevard in Vancouver to accommodate the safe movement of freight and other vehicles.

7. A partial interchange at Hayden Island, and a full interchange at Marine Drive, designed to minimize impacts on the Island's community; and improve freight, workforce traffic, and active transportation on Marine Drive.
8. A commitment to study improvements of other interchanges within the BIA.
9. Variable Rate Tolling will be used for funding, such as constructing the program, managing congestion, and improving multi-modal mobility within the BIA. The Program will study and recommend a low-income toll program, including exemptions and discounts, to the transportation commissions.
10. A commitment to establish a GHG reduction target relative to regional transportation impact, and to develop and evaluate design solutions that contribute to achieving program and state-wide climate goals.
11. A commitment to evaluate program design options according to their impact on equity priority areas with screening criteria such as air quality, land use, travel reliability, safety, and improved access to all transportation modes and active transportation facilities. The Program also commits to measurable and actionable equity outcomes and to the development of a robust set of programs and improvements that will be defined in Community Benefits Agreement.

### **Concerns with the Modified LPA**

As we continue our work as members of the Joint Oregon-Washington Legislative Action Committee to provide direction, guidance, feedback, and oversight regarding the construction of a new I-5 bridge spanning the Columbia River, we want to convey our concerns regarding the Modified LPA as recommended by the IBR Program. We feel that the current project design does not yet fully include the necessary elements required to satisfy the goals of the project as reflected in the project's Purpose and Need statement.

We recognize the supplemental draft environmental impact statement (SDEIS) process includes opportunities to further refine a bridge design. We feel this opportunity for further refinement is needed to ensure a design that meets our collective goals. We are adamant that the replacement bridge must adequately serve the region's needs moving forward. As the replacement bridge is intended to serve users for the next century, the bridge design must contemplate the long-term projections for the movement of freight and people along the I-5 corridor, and we must be prepared to meet those needs. We ask that the IBR Program work to ensure that refinements to meet these goals are included in the work ahead.

Specifically, our collective concerns, which thus may not precisely reflect the particular concerns of each member, around the Modified LPA as recommended by the IBR Program revolve around the following aspects:

- Cost and affordability of the bridge project, including the cost of each major component, such as transit, Washington side improvements, Oregon side improvements, and a drawbridge, and the allocation of costs between the two states;
- Improving congestion relief;
- Improving freight mobility;

- Insufficient number of proposed lanes on the bridge, including auxiliary lanes and shoulders;
- Tolling amount, including time-of-day tolls and potential discounts, and the interaction of the I-5 bridge tolls with other proposed tolls in the Portland Metro area;
- The necessity for regionally appropriate transit mode or modes, including the local source of funding for the operation of the proposed extension of light rail to Vancouver; and
- Bridge height, including the U.S. Coast Guard's concerns reflected in its letter dated June 17, 2022, indicating a minimum bridge height of 178 feet.

We understand that the Modified LPA will be further evaluated through the environmental review process, which includes opportunities for public comment and will inform the continuation of project design. Recognizing there is more work to be done to finalize a project design that ultimately meets our collective goals regarding this important project, we stand ready to join with our Oregon neighbors and agency partners in continuing this work.

**Washington Members of the Joint Oregon-Washington Legislative Action Committee**

Senator Annette Cleveland

Representative Jake Fey

Representative Paul Harris

Senator Marko Liias

Senator Ann Rivers

Representative Brandon Vick

Senator Lynda Wilson

Representative Sharon Wylie

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