

I-5 Columbia River Crossing
April 17, 2013

Introduction

This timeline shows most of the major steps and obstacles throughout 17 years of discussions and planning for the Columbia River Crossing project. The massive, multi-billion dollar project would replace the aged I-5 Interstate bridges and improve several interchanges in South Vancouver and North Portland.

Though it was recognized in 1996 that congestion on the I-5 corridor at this bridge is costing the region dearly, the process to narrow down a solution to meet the needs of two states, two cities, two transit agencies and two metropolitan planning organizations to address this has been time consuming and often quite controversial. The complex project is now potentially one short year away from breaking ground and the level of controversy seems to be peaking.

- **1996:** Washington and Oregon DOTs meet with businesses and civic leaders to examine whether congestion issues on the I-5 corridor at the Columbia River are negatively impacting the local economy.
- **1999:** The area's transportation policy-makers appoint the Leadership Committee, a 14-member group of business and civic leaders.
- **December 1999:** Leadership Committee publishes Portland/Vancouver I-5 Trade Corridor Study. The study identified the magnitude of the congestion problem on I-5, costs of inaction, improvements needed, how to fund improvements, and next steps in the process.
- **1999/2000:** Leadership Committee recommends initiating a public process to develop a plan for improving the I-5 corridor.
- **2001:** Washington and Oregon governors form the 26-member I-5 Portland/Vancouver Transportation and Trade Partnership Taskforce to study problems and potential solutions for I-5 corridor from I-205/I-5 junction in Washington to the I-84 interchange in Oregon.
- **June 2002:** Portland/Vancouver I-5 Transportation and Trade Partnership publishes its Final Strategic Plan. The plan provided findings on key issues, including transit, freeway capacity, environmental justice, and financing. It also provided recommendations for action and spelled out the next steps in the process to improve the corridor.
- **Early 2005:** Governors appoint 39-member Task Force to advise the DOTs on project-related issues and concerns.

- **Late 2006:** Four of 12 originally developed transportation plans are selected for a final proposal, along with a fifth no-build option.
- **2007:** Task Force explores using existing I-5 bridges to meet the project's purpose and need. Work on Draft Environmental Impact Statement under way.
- **May 2, 2008:** DEIS published, comment period begins.
- **July 2008:** Six local partner agencies selected a replacement I-5 bridge and light rail extension to Clark College as the project's Locally Preferred Alternative.
- **Summer 2008:** The Environmental Protection Agency finds the DEIS did not adequately cover certain issues, including potential increased suburban sprawl, which could negatively impact minority communities in North Portland.
- **November 2008:** Governors appoint 10-member Project Sponsors Council to help develop a long term, comprehensive solution for a five-mile stretch of I-5 between Portland and Vancouver.
- **December 2009:** Federal Transit Administration approved the project into preliminary engineering.
- **Late 2009/early 2010:** A series of public meetings are held to address the concerns of Hayden Island residents and businesses over lack of local access, overhead structures and elevation at Tomahawk Island Drive, and overall footprint of a proposed interchange on the island.
- **April 2010:** Washington and Oregon governors convene an Independent Review Panel (IRP) to ensure that key project study assumptions and methods are reasonable.
- **August 9, 2010:** Project Sponsors Council chooses 10-lane option with new Hayden Island interchange.
- **September 2010:** Governors and DOTs accept IRP's findings and recommendations. The IRP unanimously assesses that the project should move forward with a new crossing to be built at the earliest possible date.
- **October, 2010:** The Washington and Oregon departments of transportation convene a Bridge Expert Review Panel to evaluate bridge types and configurations for the replacement Interstate Bridge.
- **2010:** City of Vancouver and C-Tran select light rail route through downtown Vancouver.

- **Late 2010/early 2011:** The appearance of a new I-5 bridge is a major topic of discussion among project partners. Some argue for an iconic design, while others argue a simpler design is still effective but less costly.
- **April 2011:** Governors of Washington and Oregon accept Bridge Review Panel's recommendation for a deck truss bridge type, presumably ending the debate over the bridge's appearance.
- **August 11, 2011:** Metro adopts Land Use Final Order, approving the route of CRC through Oregon, including highway improvements, the light rail route and stations, park and ride lots and maintenance facilities.
- **Summer 2011:** WSDOT performs an internal audit on the project's finances in response to accusations of lack of transparency and failure to respond to records requests.
- **September 2011:** Northeast Coalition of Neighborhoods and the Coalition for a Livable Future file suit against Metro, contending they are using an obscure 1996 law to force the project through.
- **October 2011:** Oregon Land Use Board of Appeals (LUBA) rules that Metro did not have authority to grant its approval of the CRC route through Oregon when it used a 1996 law aimed at siting rail lines. LUBA turned back most other opposing arguments.
- **September 2011:** Final EIS published.
- **December 2011:** Federal Record of Decision received.
- **March 2012:** U.S. Coast Guard announces that the new bridge, at 95 feet above the Columbia River, does not provide enough clearance to meet the "reasonable needs" of ships. CRC staff commit to analyzing options for bridge height.
- **April 12, 2012:** Metro Council approves a Revised Land Use Final Order, allowing the project to move forward within the realm of Oregon land use law.
- **November 2012:** Clark County voters reject a sales tax increase that would have covered the local cost to operate light rail.
- **November 9, 2012:** A group of 10 Southwest Washington lawmakers call for a complete redesign of the project, citing the recently rejected sales tax increase for light rail, funding problems and lack of public participation in the design.
- **December 2012:** Analysis of a 115- or 116-foot-high bridge presented to a group of Washington state lawmakers. This height will be used as the basis for the critical bridge permit application expected to be filed with the Coast Guard in early 2013.

-
- **December 19, 2012:** State transportation commissions approve bi-state tolling agreement. Tolls must still have legislative approval to be used as part of funding.
 - **February 2013:** Oregon legislature approves \$450 million for CRC, contingent upon Washington producing its share of the funding.

I-205 and CRC: Bridge-building controversy
March 7, 2013

Introduction

This is a timeline of the process to fund, plan and construct the Interstate 205 corridor, including the Glenn Jackson Bridge. Unlike the CRC project controversy, it was the I-205 corridor, not the I-205 bridge itself that was controversial. Still, comparing I-205 and I-5 is like comparing Granny Smith apples to Red Delicious apples: Though the I-5 corridor and bridge already exist, CRC is faced with the same kinds of trials and controversy that challenged Oregon and Washington during two decades of work on I-205.

- **June 29, 1956:** President Eisenhower signs Federal-Aid Highway Act, which funded construction of 41,000 miles of Interstate Highway System, including I-205. The funding was handled through a Highway Trust Fund that paid 90 percent of construction costs, with the remaining 10 percent funded by the states.
- **Mid-1960s:** I-205 corridor identification and planning.
- **1968:** City of Maywood Park, which incorporated in 1967 with the intent of halting construction of the freeway through its locale, files lawsuit against the Oregon State Highway Commission. The city lost the case and corridor design continued.
- **1969:** Oregon and Washington signed a design and construction pact.
- **May 1970:** I-205 George Abernathy Bridge, over the Willamette River in Oregon City, opened.
- **1971:** Maywood Park again attempted to halt construction, filing suit in federal court. The city lost the suit, but concessions were made by the state. Among those, it was agreed that I-205 would be built below grade, and a large sound berm would be constructed.
- **1973:** Groups opposed to the project filed petitions with the Department of Environmental Quality.
- **1974:** I-205 from I-5 northeast to West Linn and Oregon City opened in Clackamas County.
- **July 1974:** Multnomah County Board of Commissioners formally retracted an earlier approval of the I-205 route and required that ODOT redesign a nine-mile section of freeway.
- **December 1974:** ODOT stopped taking action on all pending right-of-way acquisitions with the I-205 corridor.

- **April 1975:** The City of Portland suggested modification of the I-205 designs to include bus lanes and other mass transit improvements.
- **Summer 1975:** Tentative consensus was reached that would keep the right-of-way but allow some dedication for bus-only lanes while removing or redesigning several of the originally planned interchanges.
- **November 1975:** FHWA objected to portions of the compromise plan related to types of interchanges and busway design. A local group published a "Report to the People" that asked if I-205, as newly proposed and agreed to, would be functional and worth the cost.
- **December 1975:** Following changes to the interchanges and redesign of portions of the bus corridor, FHWA withdrew its opposition and so removed the major obstacle to construction of the segment between Foster Road and the Columbia River.
- **August 1977:** Construction began on the Glenn Jackson Bridge.
- **1978:** Maywood Park filed another lawsuit for alleged damage to properties along the west side of the city. The city again lost its lawsuit.
- **1978 – 1979:** Most controversial segment of I-205 in Multnomah County constructed as a six-lane facility with fewer interchanges and fewer lanes than originally proposed; rights of way reserved for a busway.
- **December 1982:** I-205 Glenn L. Jackson Bridge over the Columbia River opened, thus completing the Oregon section.
- **1983:** Washington section of I-205 completed, thus finishing the bypass route.

Funding

The entire I-205 corridor, including the Glenn Jackson Bridge, cost about \$480 million. Oregon's portion cost roughly \$230 million, the bridge cost \$170 million, and Washington spent roughly \$80 million.

It is unclear whether the \$53 million it cost to build the justice center to replace Rocky Butte Jail is included in these numbers.