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**Federal Highway  
Administration**

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**Remarks by FHWA Oregon Division Administrator Phillip Ditzler before the  
Oregon House Committee on Transportation and Economic Development,  
February 12, 2014**

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) supports legislation to advance the I-5 Columbia River Crossing (CRC) project. The I-5 bridges and the interstate on both sides of the bridges are elements of a national transportation network that is vital to the prosperity of our nation and the State of Oregon.

The need for a project is real. Traffic is congested at the I-5 bridge for large parts of the day with daily backups measured in miles and hours. This congestion adversely impacts the quality of life for people, the productivity of businesses, and our economic competitiveness as a state and as a nation. Safety is compromised under existing conditions. Roughly one crash occurs daily within the project limits, a rate two times higher than similar highway sections in Oregon and Washington. The existing I-5 bridges utilize a lift span and a red light, the only red light on I-5 between Canada and Mexico. Short on/off ramps, inadequate space for merging and weaving, poor sight distances and frequent bridge lifts, all contribute to the compromised safety of this section of interstate. The existing I-5 bridges are supported on timber piles in liquefiable soils making it vulnerable to damage from earthquakes. The existing bridges are a challenge to both navigation and fish habitat. Built in 1917 and 1956, the bridges are antiquated facilities in most every aspect.

The Federal government has a long history of support for the CRC project. In 2008 President Bush identified the CRC as a project of national significance, giving the project priority designation under Executive Order. In January 2011, the National Marine Fisheries Service issued a Biological Opinion under ESA. In December 2011, FHWA & FTA executed a Record of Decision for the project. In 2012 President Obama announced the CRC as a project of national and regional significance under his "*We Can't Wait*" initiative. In January 2013, Secretaries LaHood and Napolitano expressed in a letter to Governors Kitzhaber and Gregoire the Federal government's strong support for the project. In September 2013 the USCG issued a bridge permit for the project. The recent 2014 Omnibus legislation provided \$65 million to the CRC under FTA's New Starts program. To date \$135 million in Federal-aid highway funds have been expended developing the project.

Having an Oregon led CRC project does not change FHWA's role or interest in the project. FHWA will continue to be closely involved in the project, we will continue to provide active oversight of the project, and we will remain an active partner and supporter to deliver the project. Having Oregon as the lead for this project fully meets the purpose and need, aligns with the project's NEPA Record of Decision and does not change or contradict commitments made to the public during NEPA.

In summary, the Federal Highway Administration has a long, positive and productive relationship with ODOT. Over the past 10 years, over \$4 billion in Federal-aid highway funding has flowed to ODOT and the State of Oregon. FHWA has provided oversight of ODOT in their management of these funds and in their delivery of transportation programs and projects throughout the state. FHWA has complete confidence in ODOT's ability to deliver an Oregon led CRC project, a confidence that is built on demonstrated performance.