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Columbia River Crossing Takes Major Step Forward

*Governors announce Record of Decision received from federal partners;
Technical and public process validated and authorization granted to move forward with
construction planning.*

(Salem, OR) – Federal transportation agencies today gave formal approval for the Columbia River Crossing project plan which allows final design and construction planning to proceed.

On Wednesday, the Federal Highway Administration and Federal Transit Administration signed a record of decision for the CRC. Signature on this document finalizes the environmental review process and formally identifies the federal agencies' selected alternative for the CRC – a replacement Interstate 5 bridge with light rail.

"This is the culmination of years of hard work, thousands of hours of public input and reams of detailed and extensive technical analysis," Governor Chris Gregoire said. "Businesses and jobs in Washington, Oregon and all along the West Coast depend on this economic corridor. By replacing the aging bridge over the Columbia River, we are strengthening our state's competitiveness and laying a stronger foundation for a better economy. This decision moves us closer to fixing a significant economic bottleneck and getting people back to work."

The record of decision allows the project to be eligible for future federal funding.

“Today, our federal partners have reconfirmed the purpose and need for the project and validated the process used to select a preferred alternative,” said Governor Kitzhaber. “The Columbia River Crossing is essential to keep Oregon’s exports moving from all across Oregon to the world’s markets. The record of decision is the final step in a planning process that extends back to my first term as governor. It’s time to move forward for the region and our state and on to what’s needed to deliver a project we know will have far-reaching benefits.”

“This is a major step forward for this critical project that will create jobs and lay down a strong foundation for long-term economic growth throughout the region,” said Senator Patty Murray. “The Columbia River Crossing project is going to reduce congestion, increase safety, and make the entire region a more attractive place to live and do business.”

Public discussions related to the bottlenecks at the Interstate Bridge across the Columbia River began in 1999 and have been nearly continuous since then. The CRC project formally entered the required decision-making process under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) in 2005. Through that process, advisory groups, partner agencies and the public worked with CRC staff to generate and screen 70 project ideas, narrow them to 12 multi-modal representative alternatives, before selecting five alternatives to study for the draft Environmental Impact Statement. One locally preferred alternative was selected in 2008 by sponsor agencies. A final EIS on the locally preferred alternative was released in September 2011.

The record of decision identifies the environmental footprint and documents community and environmental commitments and mitigation. CRC staff will continue to work with sponsor agencies, stakeholders and the members of the public in the coming months to refine the local improvements during the final design and pre-construction phase.

With the record of decision, the Oregon and Washington departments of transportation will begin discussing construction funding and future governance of the new facilities with the Oregon and Washington state legislatures.

More information, including links to the signed record of decision, mitigation commitments and responses to comments on the final EIS is available at www.columbiarivercrossing.org.

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About the project

CRC is a long-term, comprehensive project to reduce congestion, enhance mobility and improve safety on Interstate 5 between SR 500 in Vancouver, Wash., and Columbia Boulevard in Portland. The project will replace the I-5 bridge, extend light rail to Vancouver, improve closely-spaced interchanges and enhance the pedestrian and bicycle

path between the two cities. The project will be funded by federal and state sources, as well as future tolls.

Written comments may be submitted on the CRC project at any time at feedback@columbiarivercrossing.org. More information is available at www.columbiarivercrossing.org.

