



## **US 97 Biggs Rapids-Sam Hill Bridge Deck Replacement Project**

### **Business Community Meeting – March 10, 2005**

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On March 10, 2005, the Washington State Department of Transportation's (WSDOT) bridge deck replacement project team met with business owners and managers, representatives from the local trucking industry and the local Chambers of Commerce. The goal of this meeting was to discuss the two deck replacement options in greater detail and obtain feedback, suggestions and concerns from the local business communities on both sides of the river.

At the meeting, the group went through each of the two construction options and listed the pros and cons for each. In addition, the group was asked how to best handle the cons for each option if, hypothetically, WSDOT chose it for the project. The following is a transcript of this work:

#### **Option #1 = Full closure of entire bridge for four months.**

##### **Pros**

- Can get in and get out quickly without affecting the June – September grain shipping season.
- Could schedule the work to occur during slow season (January 1 – May 1) for most businesses.
- Would be less expensive (closer to \$10 million than \$16 million) to taxpayers.
- Would be safer for employees working on bridge and for motorists.

##### **Cons**

- Would negatively affect businesses on both sides because customers would use alternate routes, bypassing them entirely.
- Would significantly increase the cost of running trucks due to the high cost of diesel fuel.
- Would negatively impact employees who live on one side of the bridge and work on the other due to increased costs in fuel and wear and tear to their vehicles.
- Will cause customers from the other side of the river to take their business elsewhere.
- Will negatively impact people who frequent the businesses open 24-hours a day.
- Trucks may take other routes.
- Will have regional affects on commerce (not just local).
- Will be more expensive to build in the long run if you factor in lost business.
- Will limit access to diesel fuel for truckers.
- Will prevent emergency medical service (ambulance) access across the river.

##### **Hypothetical Situation: How could the “cons” be addressed?**

- Start construction in January and end on May 1. Note that June – September is the high season for grain shippers.

- Businesses will need firm assurance that construction will not exceed the agreed upon completion date.
- Hire two contractors to work at the same time (one from each end) and get the project done faster than 4 months.
- Need to account for the fact that there will be added traffic on SR 14, I-84 and at The Dalles bridge. Make sure there are no traffic jams or safety problems.
- Put a temporary passenger/vehicle ferry into service at the Biggs Bridge so commuters could still get across (perhaps charge a toll to pay for its operation).
- Build a floating temporary bridge next to the Biggs Bridge so traffic could still get across on US 97.
- Compensate businesses monetarily for the lost business.
- The ice isn't that bad on SR 14 in the winter, so that won't really be a problem.
- Build an auxiliary lane on one side of the bridge while the deck is replaced for workers and emergency vehicles.
- Major changes needed in traffic flow.
- Make sure any collisions resulting in a full or partial closure on SR 14 and I-84 are cleared ASAP.

## **Option #2: Single lane closures, 24/7, for 18 months.**

### **Pros**

- Would allow traffic to keep moving across river on US 97.
- Cost to motorists and truckers would be reduced when compared to option #1.
- Traffic delays to off-peak traffic could be less than 20 minutes.
- Would reduce financial impact to businesses by keeping traffic moving.
- Motorists would have choice about whether to wait in the queue or take the detour to US 197.

### **Cons**

- Would still negatively affect business on both sides of the river because of traffic delays causing motorists/visitors to take other routes.
- Would be safety concerns at either end of the bridge and on I-84 and SR 14 due to traffic back ups and added traffic.
- Could limit access to some businesses if traffic backs up too far.
- Would require six full weekend closures.
- Motorists will take alternate routes if back ups and wait times are too long.
- Would limit access to diesel fuel for truckers.
- May make area less attractive to visitors for more than four months, which could have long-term impacts because of changes in driving behaviors.

### **Hypothetical Situation: How could the "cons" be addressed?**

- Increase storage for vehicles on I-84 ramps and SR 14 turn lanes to US 97.
- Keep traffic moving as quickly as possible in the queues.

- Provide incentives for contractor to work 24/7 (or more than an 8 hour work day) and get the project done sooner.
- Businesses will need firm assurance that construction will not exceed the agreed upon completion date.
- Hire two contractors to work simultaneously to get the project done sooner.
- Set up a special time in the mornings and afternoons when people going to work on the other side of the river can cross unimpeded.
- Put a temporary passenger/vehicle ferry into service at the Biggs Bridge to help move people across the river more quickly (perhaps charge a toll to pay for its operation).
- Make sure any collisions resulting in a full or partial closure on the bridge, US 97, SR 14 or I-84 are cleared ASAP.
- Find ways to decrease the bottleneck in Biggs (perhaps divert trucks onto alternate routes since they take up the most room in the queue).

### Other Issues

- Why not just build a new bridge or a toll bridge instead of redecking the old one and keep the old one open during construction? Had a similar situation in Kennewick/Pasco. They built a second bridge next to the old one. Find out how they did it.
- Truck traffic is expected to triple in the next 10 years.
- Determine what the traffic counts are during different seasons on both sides of the bridge.

### Meeting Attendees

Virginia Wang – Tyee Motel (Rufus, OR)  
 Ken and Dee Seims – K.L.S Services (Wasco, OR)  
 Bob Rising – Pioneer Rock & Monument (Goldendale, WA)  
 Darren Hoffman – Corner Chevron (Goldendale, WA)  
 Larry Bartee – Field Representative for Sen. Gordon Smith (Pendleton, OR)  
 Keith Keller – Horse Heaven Grain LLC (Roosevelt, WA)  
 Tom Ireland – Goldendale Chamber of Commerce (Goldendale, WA)  
 Nancy Kusky – J & N Cable (Goldendale, WA)  
 Bob Russell – Oregon Trucking Associations (Portland, OR)  
 Charlie Trindall – Blue Line Transportation (Portland, OR)  
 Todd Coles – Travelodge (Wasco, OR)  
 Jim Stroud – Dinty's Market & Motel (Wasco, OR)  
 Raleigh Curtis – Mid-Columbia Producers (Moro, OR)  
 Pat Perry – Maryhill Museum (Goldendale, WA)  
 Greg Wiar – Linda's Restaurant (Rufus, OR)  
 Marta Mikkalo – Klickitat Valley Grain Growers (Goldendale, WA)  
 Dave Weitz – Grand Central Travel Center (Rufus, OR)  
 Pat Beers – Unknown business (Rufus, OR)  
 R. Neil Byrne – ODOT Motor Carrier Transportation Division (Cascade Locks, OR)