



## SR 520 Bridge Replacement and HOV Project

October 2005

### The SR 520 Catastrophic Failure Plan

The SR 520 bridges are vulnerable to storms and earthquakes and might fail during such events. WSDOT is well aware of this fact and has been working on a plan to replace the aging bridges, while ensuring the structures remain safe and functional for travelers. The SR 520 Bridge Replacement and HOV Project is quickly moving forward, but WSDOT remains concerned as the design and construction of this major project are still some years away. In the meantime, the region needs to be prepared for the facility's possible failure during an earthquake or storm, which is why WSDOT is working on updating the current plan to coordinate more closely with all potentially affected jurisdictions and agencies.

#### Keeping the Bridge Safe and the Region Moving

WSDOT currently has comprehensive regional plans to account for an emergency event. The agency has:

- Emergency response staff on-call at all times
- Traffic management procedures for a complete SR 520 shutdown, including detours, traveler information and traffic management, all enacted through WSDOT's traffic management center in Seattle, which is staffed at all times
- Procedures to notify emergency and communications personnel, other agencies, and agency executives
- Procedures to activate the Emergency Operations Center in north Seattle
- Ongoing emergency response training for staff and coordination with other agencies

In addition, WSDOT continuously monitors the bridge structure and closes it to traffic when high wind and waves threaten drivers and the integrity of the bridge. WSDOT staff, through the use of electronic sensors, track conditions around the clock and alert on-call crews when necessary.

WSDOT hopes to replace the bridge prior to any catastrophic event but recognizes that the ability to predict or control these events is limited. Because of this urgency, WSDOT and the region must continue to prepare for and respond to possible catastrophes.

#### Updating the Catastrophic Failure Plan

Puget Sound citizens have witnessed numerous examples of devastation across the country in the past few years, most recently with Hurricane Katrina and Hurricane Rita, and realize that either natural disasters or terrorist actions could strike our own region.

Knowing this, WSDOT is updating the current plan and will develop several scenarios that range from a partial to a full closure of the bridge. The department will ensure that communication and command protocols are refined and reviewed so that affected jurisdictions and agencies understand their respective roles. WSDOT will work with the FHWA to ensure that the updated plan meets the latest federal safety regulations, and will consolidate multi-agency plans (WSDOT, Homeland Security, Washington State Patrol, etc.) into one document.

Although it is sometimes difficult to predict exactly when a storm or earthquake may occur, we can be prepared to deal with the aftermath in a manner that minimizes the loss of lives and property, and keeps the region functioning. WSDOT is committed to ensuring that the Puget Sound region stays safe and reliable for the traveling public. The updated SR 520 Catastrophic Failure Plan will be reviewed with jurisdictions and involved agencies as work progresses, with the goal of finalizing the plan in early 2006.

Any questions on the SR 520 Bridge Project or the Catastrophic Failure Plan can be sent to [SR520Bridge@wsdot.wa.gov](mailto:SR520Bridge@wsdot.wa.gov).