

Governor Kitzhaber and Governor Gregoire Press Release



## **NEWS RELEASE**

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# **Columbia River Crossing Project Identified in President Obama's *We Can't Wait* Initiative**

(Salem, OR) – President Obama today announced the Columbia River Crossing project as one of the transportation projects to be expedited through his *We Can't Wait* initiative. This designation recognizes the national significance of the project, and will help save time as the federal government expedites permits for the project.

“President Obama’s designation underscores the importance of the Columbia River Crossing project to the thousands of people who use on it every day to keep our region’s economy growing,” said Governor Kitzhaber. “It highlights that the project is about more than connecting Vancouver and Portland, but about connecting small and large manufacturers and businesses – from Hillsboro to Los Angeles, Seattle to Vancouver, Canada – that depend on a reliable interstate system to move their goods. This federal support will help coordinate CRC’s federal permits and demonstrates confidence that this project will get done. Now it is time for Oregon and Washington to show our commitment so we can get this going.”

The Interstate 5 bridge structures between Oregon and Washington were built in 1917 and 1958 and do not meet current safety or geometric standards. Their wooden pilings are set in liquefiable soil and are at risk in the event of an earthquake. The bridge is a critical link for freight between Canada and Mexico and one of the worst freight bottlenecks in the United States. Today, I-5 carries more than \$40 billion in freight each year and is expected

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and they can't afford losing the I-5 connection across the Columbia River from an earthquake, or for freight and commuters to be stuck in traffic during bridge lifts and accidents," said Governor Chris Gregoire. "Already, the crossing experiences four to six hours of congestion daily, and with no action that congestion is expected to stretch to 15 hours by 2030. President Obama's announcement today recognizes the importance the crossing has to the region and will help us expedite the needed federal permits. This project will provide thousands of construction jobs, as well as long-term growth in one of the most trade-dependent areas of the United States. We are committed to taking the necessary steps to begin bridge construction in 2014."

CRC began work to apply for federal, state and local permits after receiving a record of decision approving the environmental analysis and locally preferred alternative from the Federal Highway Administration and Federal Transit Administration in December 2011.

As part of a Presidential Executive Order issued in March of this year, the Office of Management and Budget is charged with overseeing a government-wide effort to make the permitting and review process for infrastructure projects more efficient and effective, saving time while driving better outcomes for local communities. Initially, 43 projects will be expedited by the Executive Order, the first seven being major port projects announced last week. Additional expedited infrastructure projects will be announced in the coming weeks.

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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.

More information is available at [www.columbiarivercrossing.org](http://www.columbiarivercrossing.org).

