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Governor Inslee Gives the Green Light to Pursue New I-5 Bridge Replacement Proposal

The Columbia River Crossing Coalition received a response from Governor Inslee today to its letter signed by 79 business and community leaders asking Governor Kitzhaber and Governor Inslee to conduct an expedited review of a proposal to build the new I-5 replacement bridge in a phased approach. The phased approach would construct the Oregon interchanges and the bridge and light rail improvements in the first phase and defer the Washington interchange improvements to a future phase.

"We are pleased Governor Inslee gave WSDOT staff the green light to do a thorough and timely review of the plan's feasibility," said Paul Montague, President of Identity Clark County. "This project is critical to the economic future of communities on both sides of the Columbia River."

The Coalition's letter, which was sent to both governors last month, asked the two states to continue to work together to keep the project on budget and on schedule. In his response Governor Inslee noted that an Oregon-managed bi-state project merits further investigation and that he has directed WSDOT to do a thorough review of its feasibility. "Everyone can agree that the problem has not gone away," Inslee noted, saying that, after 16 years of planning, engineering and public involvement, "it's critical that we find a path to move forward and replace this bridge."

The phased approach replaces the bridge, connects light rail, and improves Hayden Island and Marine Driver interchange in Oregon. Washington's other roadway and interchange improvements would be phased in when Washington funding becomes available.

"Now that both Governors have asked their transportation departments to look into the financial and legal feasibility of this phased approach, we are confident there will be agreement to move forward," said Bernie Bottomly of Portland Business Alliance.

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