

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 2095

As Reported by House Committee On: Transportation

Title: An act relating to preliminary work to develop a process for planning for a new Interstate 5 bridge spanning the Columbia river.

Brief Description: Concerning preliminary work to develop a process for planning for a new Interstate 5 bridge spanning the Columbia river.

Sponsors: Representatives Wylie, Stonier, Harris, Vick, Clibborn, Fey, McBride and Macri.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Transportation: 2/20/17, 2/22/17 [DP].

Brief Summary of Bill

- Designates the Interstate 5 (I-5) Bridge across the Columbia River as a project of statewide significance.
- Encourages the Governor to enter into an memorandum of understanding with the Governor of Oregon with a variety of purposes, including selecting a joint Oregon-Washington legislative action committee to begin a process towards project development for a new I-5 Bridge.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 14 members: Representatives Clibborn, Chair; Farrell, Vice Chair; Fey, Vice Chair; Wylie, Vice Chair; Chapman, Gregerson, Kloba, Lovick, McBride, Morris, Ortiz-Self, Pellicciotti, Riccelli and Tarleton.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 10 members: Representatives Orcutt, Ranking Minority Member; Hargrove, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Harmsworth, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Hayes, Irwin, Pike, Shea, Stambaugh, Van Werven and Young.

Staff: David Munnecke (786-7315).

Background:

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

The Interstate 5 (I-5) Bridge crosses the Columbia River and connects Vancouver, Washington, and Portland, Oregon, with two identical bridge structures. One bridge structure carries traffic northbound to Vancouver, and the other bridge structure carries traffic southbound to Portland. The northbound bridge was built in 1917, and the southbound bridge was built in 1958.

The Columbia River Crossing (CRC) Project, as described in the record of decision, would have replaced the two I-5 bridges, extended light rail to Vancouver, improved closely spaced interchanges, and enhanced pedestrian and bicycle paths. The estimated project costs ranged from \$3.1 billion to \$3.5 billion. Between 2005 and 2013, \$196.6 million was spent on the project, with the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) spending \$94.1 million and the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) spending \$102.5 million. The project was officially discontinued in the spring of 2014.

In 1997 a process was enacted to expedite the development of industrial projects of statewide significance. To qualify for designation as a project of statewide significance, a project must meet capital investment or job creation requirements. Border-crossing projects, private projects investing in manufacturing or research and development, projects that will provide a net environmental benefit, and a project that will further commercialization of an innovation may all be designated as projects of statewide significance. An application for designation as a project of statewide significance must be submitted to the Department of Commerce. The application must include a letter of approval from jurisdictions where a project is located and must commit to providing the local staff necessary to expedite the completion of a project.

Counties and cities requesting a project's designation as one of statewide significance must ensure the participation of local officials on the public-private team expediting a project's completion. The Office of Regulatory Assistance must provide facilitation and coordination services to expedite completion of industrial projects of statewide significance. The project proponents may provide the funding necessary for the local jurisdiction to hire the staff required to expedite the process.

Summary of Bill:

The process for designating a project of statewide significance is modified to allow for legislative designation. Projects of statewide significance that are designated by the Legislature are exempted from the application requirements. An I-5 Bridge that crosses the Columbia River is designated as a project of statewide significance.

The Governor is encouraged to enter into a memorandum of understanding with the Governor of Oregon, regarding the construction of a new I-5 Bridge, that achieves the following purposes:

- selects a joint Oregon-Washington legislative action committee to work with both states' departments of transportation, transportation commissions, and stakeholders to begin a process toward project development. The first meeting of the legislative action committee must occur by December 15, 2017;

- reviews and confirms lead roles related to permitting, construction, operation and maintenance of a future I-5 Bridge project;
- establishes a process to seek public comment on the I-5 Bridge project development plan;
- works to ensure that there are sufficient resources available to the state departments of Transportation to inventory and utilize existing data to allow for nonduplicative and efficient decision making regarding a new project;
- examines all potential mass transit options available for a new I-5 Bridge project;
- utilizes design-build procurement or better innovative project delivery method and determines the least costly, most efficient project management, and best practices tools consistent with the work already completed;
- considers the creation of a Columbia River bridge authority to review bridge needs and make recommendations to both states regarding financing, timing of improvements and operations of the bridges; and
- reports to the Legislatures of each state the findings and recommendations of the legislative action committee by December 15, 2018.

The Washington Department of Transportation (WSDOT) must conduct a planning inventory to document existing planning data related to the construction of a new I-5 Bridge. The WSDOT must report back to the Legislature on the details of the planning inventory.

Appropriation: The sum of \$350,000 from the Motor Vehicle Fund is appropriated to the WSDOT for a planning inventory.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) The CRC project died in 2014, and over the last year, southwest Washington legislators have worked to develop a process for a replacement project.

To develop a new bridge, you will need a willing partner in Oregon. The closure of the container terminal in Portland and a new casino in Clark County is leading to new traffic.

Everything in this bill has been considered and negotiated. This is a start to a project, and sends a signal that a comprehensive process will be developed.

The population of Ridgefield is now 8,000, which is four times what it was a decade ago. One employer in Ridgefield decided against moving its headquarters to the city because of the traffic on I-5. A new casino nearby will bring up to 15,000 new trips per day to this already impacted corridor. The casino will have 1,000 new employees when it opens, and should have 2,000 employees within five years.

The new project needs to grow off of the previous project experience. There needs to be a replacement for the bridge that is already there before a new corridor can be contemplated.

The bill does not presuppose a solution, and it seeks public input on the replacement. Eight cities in Clark County send people up and down the I-5 corridor, and this issue binds seven of those cities together in a desire to replace the bridge. People flood Vancouver's streets trying to get to the bridge, and accidents on the bridge create gridlock throughout the region.

It would be ideal to build another corridor, as well as resolve the current chokepoint, but if an earthquake occurs there may be only one bridge. Planning is already underway to fix the Rose Quarter issue.

The I-5 Bridge replacement and transit improvements is a priority project of the southwest Washington regional transportation planning organization. House Bill 2095 is consistent with this and a priority.

The top transportation issue in the whole state is I-5 congestion. We need to improve freight mobility, and the problem of I-5 congestion is getting exponentially worse.

The President wants to support infrastructure improvements, and the state should seek that assistance.

Efforts have been made to improve the traffic on the I-5 Bridge since 1979. Workers, businesses, and elected officials all want a fix to the bridge. Oregon wants Washington to step up to do something, and that is what this bill does.

A number of past Presidents have declared the importance of I-5 and replacing this bridge. The bridge is impacting transportation and businesses in the area want the problem solved.

The most important initiative for Clark County businesses is fixing the I-5 corridor and replacing the current bridge. This bill provides a new method for doing so, and a potential example for further bridge expansion.

(Opposed) The problem should be fixed by expanding the scope of the bill. A new I-5 Bridge won't fix the problem. Oregon has no interest in a new bridge without new corridors.

A new bridge can wait. This bill would not fix the traffic and would cause new problems. It also opens the door to bringing light rail to Vancouver.

The I-5 Bridge needs to be fixed or replaced, but 10 lanes across the Columbia does not get people to Portland any faster. Building a new corridor would alleviate both earthquake and traffic concerns.

Persons Testifying: (In support) Representative Wylie, prime sponsor; Ron Onslow, City of Ridgefield; Sean Guard, City of Washougal; Jack Burkman, City of Vancouver; Matt Ransom, Regional Transportation Council; Mike Bomar, Columbia River Economic Development Council; Mike Iyall, Cowlitz Tribal Council; Ed Barnes, Southwest

Washington Labor Roundtable; Robert Schaefer, High Tech Council; and Ron Arp, Identity Clark County.

(Opposed) Phil Haggerty; Bill Wagner; and Neil Cahoon.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.