

Second Tier of Study Underway

The second of three tiers of an evaluation of alternatives for a new or improved Highway 35 Columbia River crossing between Hood River, Oregon and Bingen/White Salmon, Washington is at its midpoint. So far, during this portion of the study, the project team has identified a broad range of preliminary alternatives in the three remaining crossing corridors; and evaluated and narrowed down preliminary alternatives to a shorter list of options. The remaining work is to:

- Conduct more detailed analysis of the remaining alternatives, including a financial/economic feasibility analysis, and further narrow down the list.
- Identify possible designs for crossing alternatives.

If undertaken, a third tier of the study will be used to evaluate two or three final alternatives in even greater detail.

The study is being undertaken by the Southwest Washington Regional Transportation

Council (RTC), in partnership with the Oregon and Washington Departments of Transportation (ODOT and WSDOT) and local cities and counties. The end result is expected to be a greater understanding of the potential benefits and drawbacks of a new or improved crossing, short and long-term recommendations for improvements, and an implementation and funding strategy.



SR-35 Columbia River Crossing Project Update



Process Identifies Options

Over the last several months, the project team, with guidance from local elected officials and citizens has narrowed down a preliminary set of 17 alternatives to seven (including a "no action" alternative). Ultimately, regional administrators from the Oregon and Washington Departments of Transportation identified the remaining alternatives, after considering recommendations from the project team, a Local Advisory Committee of local residents, business people and other interests, and a Steering Committee of local appointed and elected officials.

The remaining alternatives include two or more options in each crossing corridor. Some alternatives would result in a new bridge for vehicles, bicycles and pedestrians. Other options would include a new bridge for

cars and trucks, with re-use of the existing bridge for bikes and pedestrians. One tunnel option and one option that would retrofit the existing bridge for all modes of traffic also

are still under consideration. None of the bridge options would include a "lift span" (drawbridge section). Consequently, re-using the existing bridge would require construction of new support structures for a higher bridge that would accommodate river traffic without having to be raised.



Alternatives Under Study

These alternatives, listed by corridor, include:

City Center Corridor. Second Street interchange in Hood River to SR-14 in Washington.

- ✓ New bridge for cars, trucks, bicyclists and pedestrians
- ✓ Tunnel for cars and trucks here; existing bridge rebuilt for bicyclists and pedestrians

Existing Corridor. Approximately same alignment as current bridge.

- ✓ New bridge for cars, trucks, bicyclists and pedestrians
- ✓ Retrofit existing bridge for cars, trucks, bicyclists and pedestrians

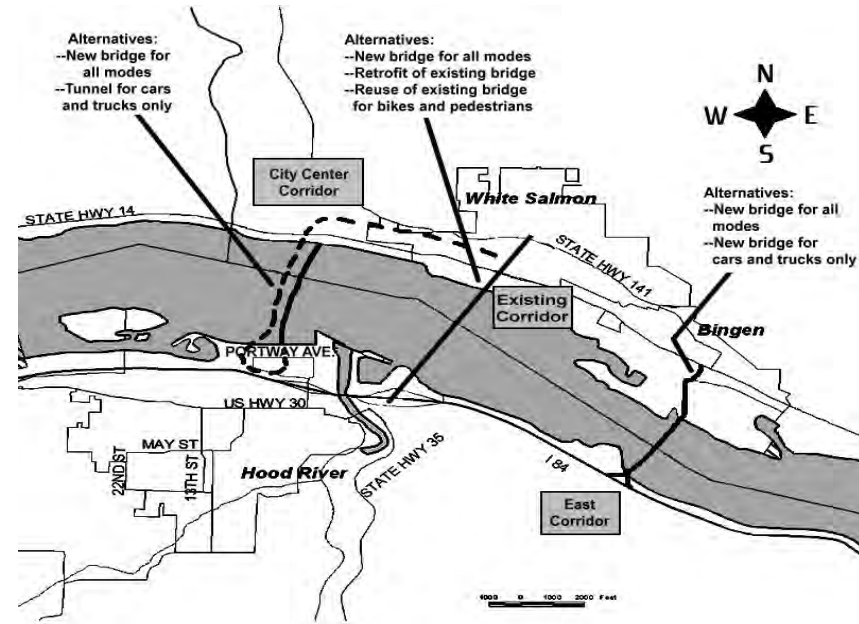
East Corridor. Connects Koberg State Park in Oregon to Bingen Point in Washington.

- ✓ New bridge for cars, trucks, bicyclists and pedestrians
- ✓ New bridge for cars and trucks; existing bridge rebuilt for bicyclists and pedestrians

No action.

Continued use of existing bridge.

- ✓ No new bridge or significant improvements other than currently planned by the Port of Hood River



Economic and Financial Feasibility Study to be Undertaken

As part of a more detailed evaluation of remaining river crossing alternatives, the project team will study the financial and economic feasibility of a new or improved crossing. The study will be based in part on the results of the recent survey and is expected to help answer questions like:

- How much will a new crossing cost to build and operate?
- What sources of money might be available to pay for the project?
- How much of the cost will local residents need to pay, vs. money from state or federal programs?
- If tolls are needed to help pay for a new crossing, how much are bridge users willing to pay?

Bridge Design Topic of Youth Contest and Next Public Meeting

The White Salmon Enterprise, Hood River News and several local businesses and youth organizations are co-sponsoring a local design contest for young people. The contest is open to youth between the ages of 5 and 18 living within the Bingen, Hood River or White Salmon areas. Contestants have been asked to submit a drawing of a new or improved bridge or tunnel across the Columbia River. Entries will be judged on the basis of originality and creativity. Prizes are being donated by Da Kine, Discover Bicycles, Hood River Outfitters, Hood River Parks and Recreation, Pietro's Pizza, McDonald's and Walmart, among others.

Winners of the youth bridge design contest will be announced at the next public open house on February 28, 2002 at the Hood River Inn from 5 to 8 p.m., where winning entries will be on display. Open house participants will be asked to review and comment on bridge designs recommended by members of the Local Advisory and Steering Committees for each of the corridors still being studied.

Don't Miss Our Next Open House!

The next public meeting is scheduled for February 28, 5 to 8 p.m. at the Hood River Inn. Participants will have a chance to learn more about the results of our recent public opinion survey and tell us what they think of different bridge and tunnel design concepts.

Most Residents Favor New Crossing

In October, 2001, the survey research firm Gilmore Research, Inc. conducted a random telephone poll of approximately 200 residents each in Oregon and in Washington. They also undertook a motorist "intercept" study of over 250 people driving over the bridge during a two-day period in October. About 60% of the people who participated in the intercept study are local residents. Participation rates were very high for both surveys.

Most agree that an improved crossing is needed; 63% of telephone respondents say there is a great need for a new or improved crossing, while 25% say there is some need. Responses from the intercept study were very similar. People who use the existing bridge more frequently are more likely to favor a new or improved crossing. Support also is stronger in Washington than Oregon.

According to both survey efforts, many trips across the bridge are for non-work purposes, such as shopping, visiting friends or recreation.

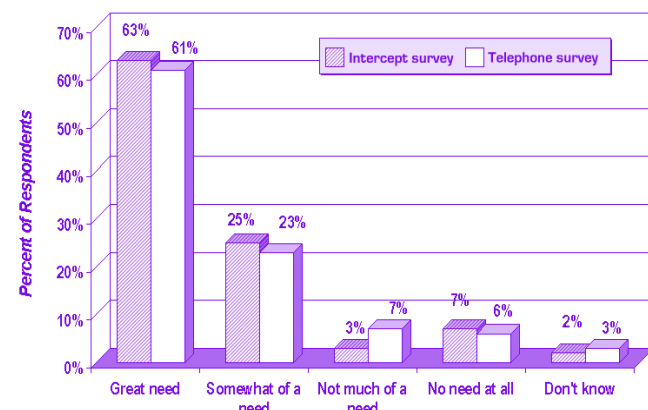
About 10-20% of those surveyed say they would have made their last bridge trip by walking or biking, if given the opportunity.

Opinions on where a new crossing should be built are mixed; the current location receives the highest support among people who participated in the motorist "intercept" study.

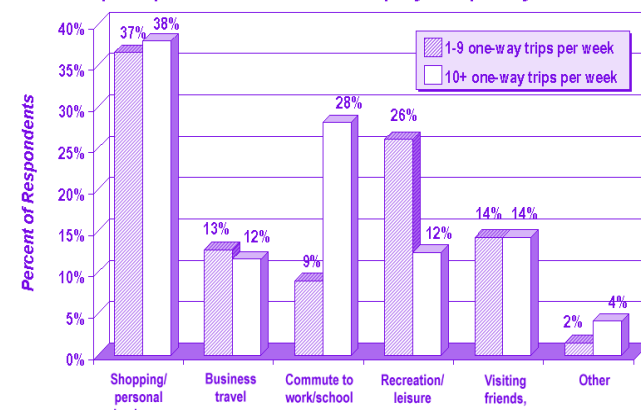
A significant percentage of residents would be willing to pay higher tolls to use a new or improved bridge. On average, Oregon residents are willing to pay higher tolls than Washington residents.

Generally, people surveyed prefer tolls to other financing methods such as a combination of tolls and taxes or local taxes only.

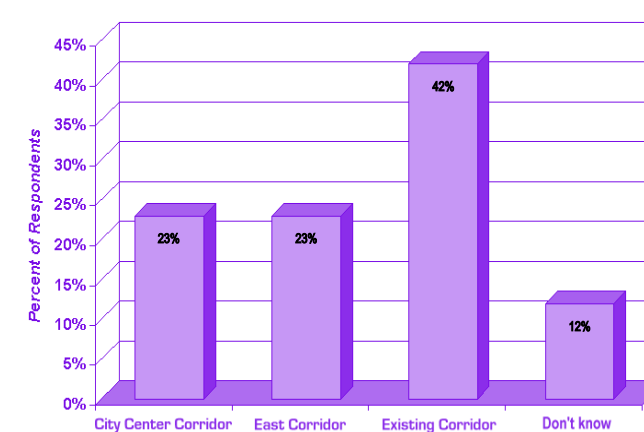
Perceived Need for a New or Improved Crossing



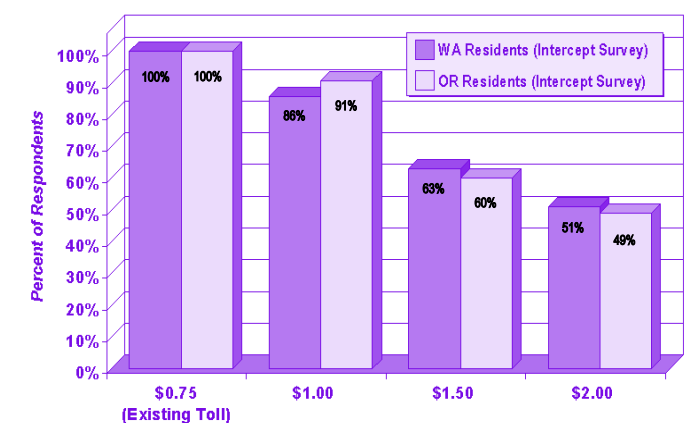
Trip Purpose of Most Recent Trip by Frequency of Use



Location Preference for a New Crossing

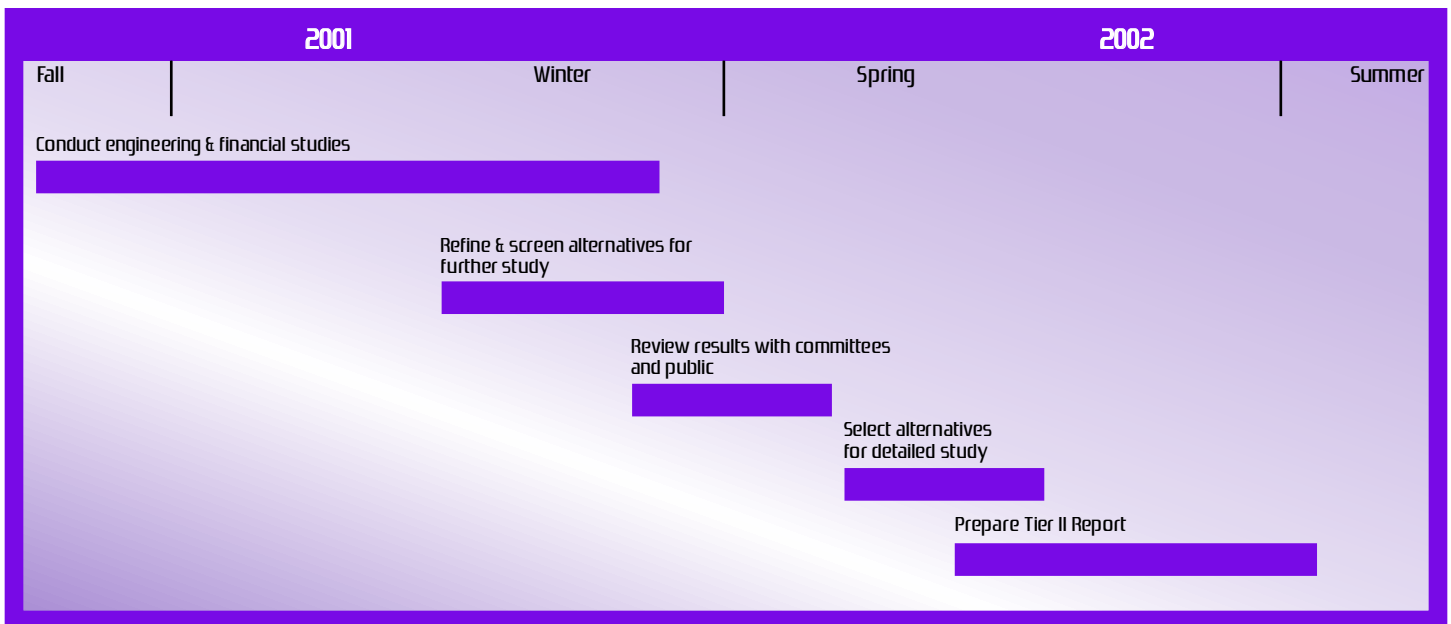


Willingness to Pay a Higher Toll for Current Trip by State of Residence



SW Washington Regional Transportation Council
1351 Officer's Row
Vancouver, WA 98661

Tier II Schedule



Want to Know More?

To find out more about the project and comment:

- Attend the next community open house February 28, 2002, 5 - 8 p.m. at the Hood River Inn.
- Attend a project advisory committee meeting some time in May, 2002.
- Request a presentation to your neighborhood, business and civic group; call Dale Robins, 360-397-6067.
- Ask to be added to our mailing list by contacting RTC by phone (360-397-6067) or e-mail (SR35@rtc.wa.gov).
- Visit our Web site at www.rtc.wa.gov/studies/sr35.
- View displays in community buildings in Bingen, Hood River and White Salmon.

Who to Contact for More Information

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