

SW Washington Regional Transportation Council
PO Box 1366
Vancouver, WA 98666

Public Provides Guidance Throughout Process

Throughout the feasibility study, members of the community were informed and engaged in the process through a variety of means, including:

- * Seven project newsletters, providing regular updates on key decisions and milestones.
- * Twelve meetings of three advisory groups, including local officials, citizens, and state and federal regulatory agencies.
- * Six public open houses to review progress and provide guidance at regular intervals.
- * Bridge design workshop with advisory committee members and other stakeholders.
- * Numerous media releases and news articles detailing the status of the study and opportunities to comment.
- * Meetings with local civic and business groups.

- * A youth bridge design contest sponsored by local businesses.
- * Periodic direct mailings and e-mail communications to several hundred interested parties.
- * Use of a project Web site to provide access to detailed information about the study.
- * Distribution and public review of the DEIS, with copies available at community libraries on both sides of the Columbia and online via the project Web site.

Community members regularly attended public meetings and generally voiced support for a new bridge. A majority of participants in a public opinion poll expressed a willingness to help fund it through tolls. Upon completion of the study, few people took issue with the key findings in the DEIS and none voiced any direct opposition to the proposal to build a new bridge. Comments in earlier phases of the project focused primarily on previous alternatives that were subsequently eliminated from study.

For More Information

If you have questions about the project, please contact:

Dale Robins, Project Manager
Southwest Washington Regional Transportation Council
PO Box 1366
Vancouver, WA 98666
Phone: 360.397.6067, ext. 5212
Fax: 360.696.1847
E-Mail: sr35@rtc.wa.gov

Web site address: www.rtc.wa.gov/studies/sr35

Copies of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement, its Executive Summary, and a summary of comments on the DEIS are available on the project Web site or upon request via phone or e-mail.

Advisory Committee Members

The following individuals contributed their valuable time and effort to help guide this study:

Randy Anderson	Karl Kment
Brian Carlstrom	Roger Kauble
Mike Clark	Michael Lang
Cindi DeBrueller	Dean Lookingbill
Mike Doke	Michael Morneault
Maria Dominguez	Mayor Brian Prigel
Jennifer Donnelly	Charles Sciscione
Comm. Rodger Ford	Comm. Don Struck
Jerry Grossnickle	Don Wiley
Cecil Jaksha	Risa Wonsyld

Volume 7

Spring, 2004

Preferred
Alternative for
New Bridge
Identified

SR-35 Columbia River Crossing Project Update

Continued
Public Support
Essential for
Implementation

A draft environmental impact statement (DEIS) for the study of improvements to the Hood River Bridge is complete. The DEIS identifies and evaluates a preferred location for a new bridge over the Columbia River. The new bridge would replace the existing Hood River bridge and be located just west of the existing structure. It would be constructed while the existing bridge is still in place. Ultimately, the existing bridge would be demolished once the new bridge is complete.

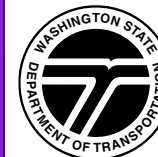
The new bridge would provide larger travel lanes for vehicles, as well as paths for bicycles and pedestrians. The bridge would be designed so that it could be widened in the future to accommodate three lanes of traffic - two lanes in the busiest direction during rush hour and one lane in the opposite direction. In addition, the new bridge would not have a "lift

span."

This would allow river traffic to pass underneath without raising and lowering the middle section of the bridge, saving time for boats and motorists alike, and reducing long-term

costs for maintenance and operation (see pages 2 and 3 for more information about the benefits of a new bridge).

Throughout the feasibility study, members of the public voiced support for a new bridge. The study was initiated and funded as a result of local efforts that spurred Washington's Congressional Delegation to sponsor a bill that resulted in federal funding for the study. A public opinion poll conducted during the study indicates that most local community members think a new bridge is needed. Of those surveyed, 84% said there is a need for a new bridge, while only 6% said there is no need.



This project is sponsored by the Southwest Regional Transportation Council and Oregon and Washington State Departments of Transportation in cooperation with the cities of Bingen, Hood River and White Salmon, and Hood River, Klickitat and Skamania Counties.



Before a new bridge can be constructed, two essential things must happen. First, a final environmental impact statement (FEIS) must be prepared. The FEIS would include preliminary design for the bridge and more detailed evaluation of selected impacts. Second, funding must be secured for construction of a new bridge. Completing the design and building a new bridge is expected to cost approximately \$200 million. The FEIS will include more precise cost estimates.

Community support and lobbying will be essential for these efforts to proceed. This project will compete for funding with many other projects at the state and federal levels. Some local community matching funds in the form of tolls or other sources will be needed to obtain federal and state funding. Several actions can be taken to help keep the project moving, including:

- Asking for support from state and federal congressional representatives on both sides of the Columbia.

State and federal funding support will be needed for construction of a new bridge.

Feasibility Study Complete!



Supporting establishment of a bridge replacement fund to help pay for a new bridge. An increase of 25 cents to the current toll could be used to help pay for a new

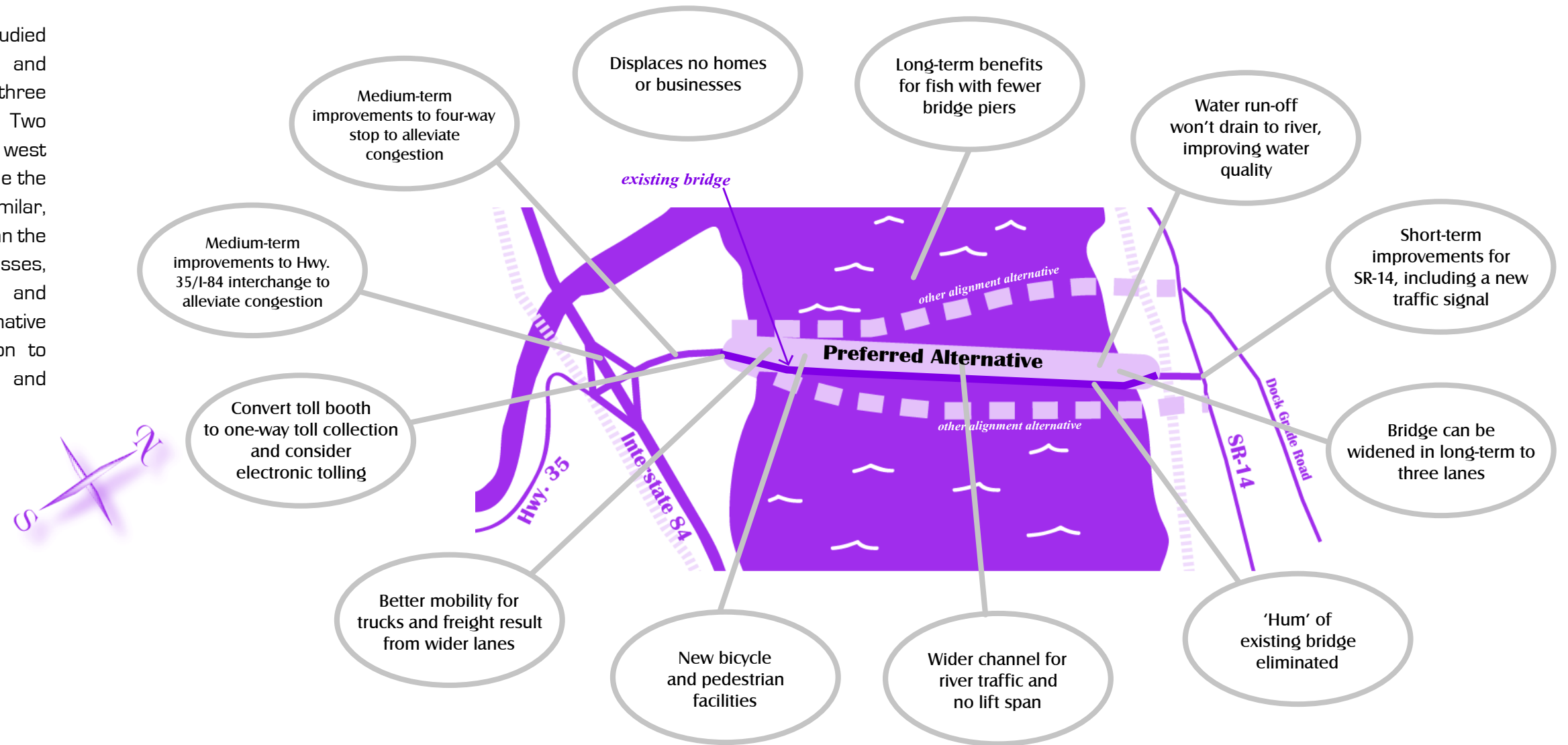
bridge. In the short-term, this could be collected by the Port of Hood River under an interagency agreement with Washington State and Oregon Departments of Transportation. The sooner such a fund is established, the more impact it will have on leveraging federal funds and helping finance a new bridge.

- Advocating for short and medium-term improvements. The DEIS identifies several interim improvements to improve traffic flow on and near the bridge, including upgrades to the Interstate 84/Highway 35 interchange. If approved, these improvements could be financed through local and state government funding programs.

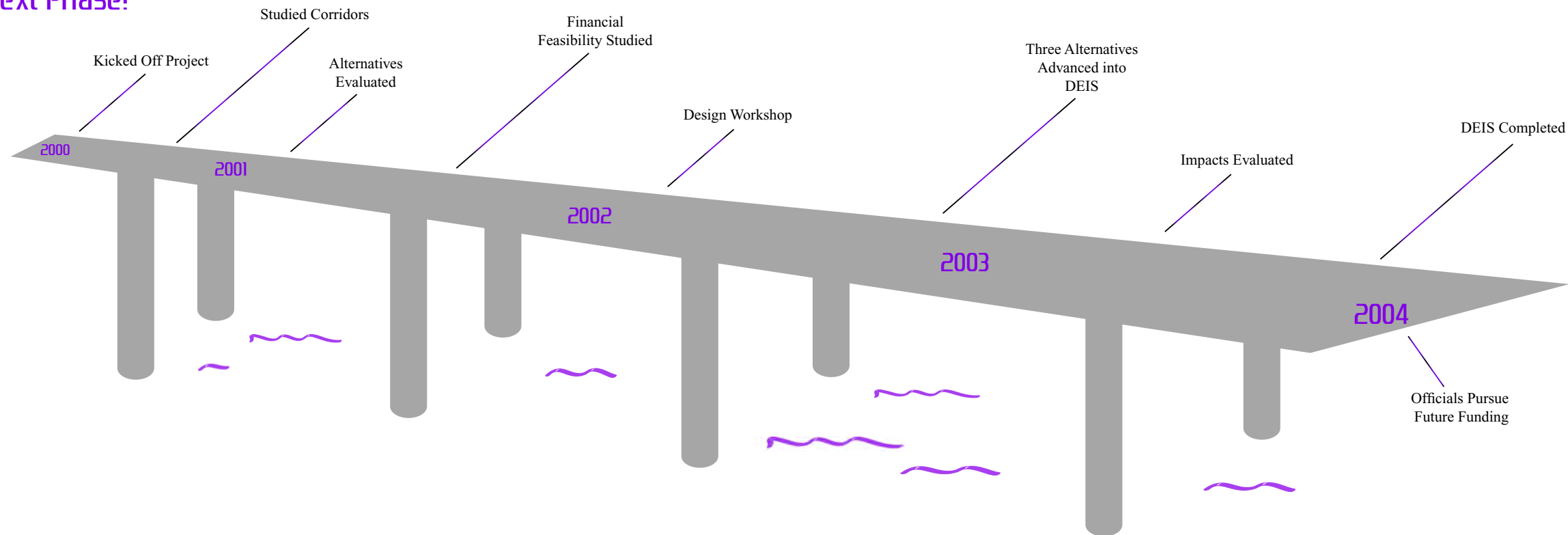
Environmental Impact Statement Identifies Benefits and Impacts

The DEIS studied the impacts and benefits of three alternatives. Two were located west of the existing bridge and one to the east.

While the impacts of the three options were relatively similar, the preferred alternative had fewer impacts than the other two options on existing homes and businesses, vegetation, soils, water quality, traffic, visual and archeological resources. The preferred alternative also has a variety of benefits in comparison to the existing bridge, as discussed on page 1 and illustrated here.



Completion of Feasibility Study Concludes Sustained Effort and Paves Way for Next Phase!



Completion of the DEIS caps a four-year effort to identify the best location and conceptual design for an improved river crossing. The study began in 2000 with an initial phase identifying project objectives and preliminary crossing corridors to be evaluated. Next, these corridors and a variety of crossing types (bridge, tunnel, water and aerial methods) were considered. Ultimately, these corridors and alternatives were narrowed for more detailed analysis, with three alternatives (see map above) advanced for evaluation in the DEIS. The DEIS underwent close scrutiny from local, state and federal agencies, as well as the general public. Completion of the DEIS sets the stage for current efforts to fund preliminary design, additional analysis, and future construction of a new bridge. Design of a new bridge also will be affected by new policies being developed by the Columbia River Gorge Commission. For more information, check their Web site at www.gorgecommission.org.