



Oregon Trails Coalition Comments on Draft SEIS for Interstate Bridge

Summary:

The Oregon Trails Coalition is primarily concerned with bridge design impacts on the safety, connectivity, accessibility, and user experience of people walking, biking, using mobility devices, and accessing transit. We are especially concerned about the bridge's impact on folks accessing existing and planned segments of the Marine Drive Path, Delta Park, Columbia Slough Path, and North Portland Greenway on the south side of the bridge and the Vancouver Waterfront Trail and the Burnt Bridge Creek Trail on the north side.

- 1. Trail Access and Experience for People Walking, Biking, Rolling:** If we are to meet safety and active transportation usership goals, clear, safe connections and wayfinding to the existing and planned regional trails network on both sides of the river is critical.
 - a. The bridge project corridor should extend to the north to Hwy 500 and Leverich Park to provide active transportation connectivity from the Burnt River Creek Trail and neighborhoods north of Hwy 500 as well as a direct connection to the Vancouver Waterfront Path.
 - b. On the south side, the project corridor should include safe, separated connections to planned segments of the Marine Drive Path (connecting to the North Portland Greenway), Delta Park, and the Columbia Slough Path.
 - c. When approaching the bridge from the north, the "Vancouver Dip" is a barrier for universal access. Under the current design, people must descend to the waterfront then use a ½ mile long, 4.5% grade circular facility to climb up to the bridge before crossing the Columbia River. This is an extreme example of out of direction travel that is exacerbated by out of elevation travel. The program needs to include a multiuse path at the bridge's grade from Evergreen to the river front so that walkers/ rollers/ riders have direct access to the bridge.
 - d. A related and significant problem is the elevation barrier into the multiuse path, especially at the Vancouver waterfront. Under current design, in order to access the multiuse bridge path, users must climb/descend a ½ mile circular ramp at 4.5% grade. This is a significant barrier and is ableist in design. If the elevation of the multiuse path crossing the Columbia River cannot be lowered, then elevators need to be made available for active transportation users.

- e. There should be robust and consistent wayfinding signage and pavement markings to connect folks to trails, active transportation facilities, and transit stops on both sides of the bridge.
- f. The active transportation and transit facilities are on opposite sides of the bridge. As a result, there is additional out of direction travel for people making trips that combine transit and walking/rolling/biking.
- g. **We strongly encourage more study of design options that put transit and active transportation facilities together for increased access, safety, comfort, emergency response, and user options.**

2. Safety, Comfort, and Equitable Access If we are to meet or exceed active transportation usership goals, the system must be designed to be welcoming of those who are eight to eighty years old —by ensuring seamless, accessible pathways without extra distance or difficult grades. By integrating open views, rest areas, and close transit access, the bridge can become a safe, enjoyable route for all.

- a. Noise, dirt, and debris: Active transportation users need protection from road noise, dirt, and vehicle debris.
- b. Grade and Distance: Current designs require significant out of direction travel both in terms of distance and grade for active transportation users while single occupancy vehicle travel experiences little to no out of direction travel.
- c. Due to the long span of the bridge without the benefit of tree canopy, there should be provisions for shading the multi-use path as the number of days regional heat advisories continue to increase.
- d. Open views to appreciate nature: Positioning the active transportation facilities in a way to access views of nature can reduce stress and increase comfort, thus encouraging more users.
- e. If two-level bridge, prevent rain (and other liquid) runoff onto multi-use path
- f. Personal Safety - Bridge connections should adequately separate people walking, biking, and rolling from motor vehicles and bridge and approach pathways should include adequate lighting.
- g. Emergency Access -
 - i. Medical and police vehicles must be able to directly access multi-use path. Lack of embedded rail ties prevent ambulances and emergency responders to directly support those using the multi-use path.
 - ii. If emergency responders are expected to access multi-use path by parking on highway shoulder and scaling divider, we are concerned there is not sufficient separation between automobiles traveling at highway speeds and active transportation modes.

3. Operations & Maintenance of Active Transportation System

- a. Active transportation paths must have a long term financial plan for clearing the right of way of debris, glass, trash, snow and ice, etc.
- b. The bridge maintenance and operations plan should include clearing active transportation routes and pathways on bridge and all along approaches

4. Environmental and Climate Impact We want a climate-resilient bridge that supports active and public transportation, reducing reliance on cars and cutting emissions long-term. An environmentally friendly design promotes cleaner, healthier spaces, with natural buffers and materials that help protect public health and the environment.

- a. As heat increases in the region, the need for climate-resilience/mitigation is necessary. This includes protection from the sun through natural and/or manmade shade.
- b. Reducing single occupancy vehicle miles traveled will reduce air particulate pollution.
- c. Modeshift to transit and active transportation also:
 - i. Reduces noise pollution
 - ii. Reduces the impacts of water runoff, including chemical, oil, tire particulate and brake particulate runoff
- d. Global impacts: The proposed design does little to reduce auto travel, estimating a 62% increase in study-area VMT over current amounts (Executive Summary, S-21). Shifting modeshare to active transportation and transit is the most effective method of reducing VMT and meeting specific state/regional climate goals.

About the Oregon Trails Coalition

The Oregon Trails Coalition advisory council includes representatives from more than thirty federal, state, and local agencies, trail user groups, outdoor industry and tourism partners, and volunteer organizations. We represent walkers, bikers, runners, paddlers, equestrians, adaptive equipment users, skiers, snowmobilers, and motorized trail enthusiasts.

We envision a statewide network of sustainable trails that: connect Oregonians of all backgrounds and abilities to the outdoors, build a culture of environmental and cultural stewardship and healthy recreation, provide an off-street network for traveling within and between Oregon communities, and attract a wide range of users that contribute to Oregon's urban and rural economies.