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NEWS RELEASE

April 25, 2011

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Governors Gregoire, Kitzhaber announce plan to deliver Columbia River Crossing project on schedule

(PORTLAND, Ore.) – Washington Governor Chris Gregoire and Oregon Governor John Kitzhaber today announced their plan to take advantage of federal funding opportunities and break ground on the Columbia River Crossing project in 2013.

“Our timing is important – we are seeking nearly \$1.3 billion in federal funding for this project. We must secure a federal Record of Decision on our design this year to ensure the best chance of receiving full funding,” said Governor Gregoire.

“Our decision today is a strategic commitment to make transportation investments that reflect the realities of the future, not the past,” said Governor Kitzhaber. “Moving this project to completion in the most cost effective way possible is critical to providing a safer, less congested transportation system.”

Standing with community leaders, the two governors identified the deck truss bridge as the best replacement structure for the aging Interstate 5 bridge because it provides the most certain path to keep the project on schedule and on budget. The other bridge options under consideration would require delays for additional design work and environmental analysis, which would add time and cost to the process.

“This is an important milestone, and it has been reached thanks to real collaboration between both states and the federal government,” said U.S. Senator Patty Murray, chair of the Senate Transportation Appropriations Subcommittee. “And that’s important because this bridge is not just a regional imperative, it’s also a national priority that deserves a strong federal investment. As I have said all along, I stand ready to fight for the funding this project needs in Washington, D.C., and the local families, businesses and commuters who will benefit from a new bridge. Today is an important next step in building a bridge that will improve this region’s economy and quality of life.”

The governors cited several major factors influencing their decision to move forward with a deck truss bridge:

- **Reducing and eliminating risks to schedule and budget.** In all key areas that determine risk – schedule, design, construction, procurement, cost growth and construction claims – the deck truss performs better than the cable stayed bridge type. It also is the least likely to require a supplemental draft environmental impact statement because its environmental impacts and footprint closely resemble the previously studied bridge type.
- **Affordability.** The deck truss is likely the most affordable of the three bridge types because it is the least costly, the most likely to meet schedule, the easiest bridge to build and will attract the most competitive bids.
- **Securing Funding.** A delay in securing the federal Record of Decision (ROD) creates significant risks of missing or delaying federal funding opportunities. The CRC is seeking \$400 million in federal highway discretionary funding as well as \$850 million in Federal Transit Administration (FTA) New Starts funding.

U.S. Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood, "The new Columbia River Crossing project is a forward-thinking multimodal project that will not only serve area residents, but create jobs, spur economic development and help ensure that the region's economy continues to thrive. Thanks to the leadership of both states, citizens of Oregon and Washington will benefit from a 21st century crossing that connects the region's ports with the highway system and economic opportunities beyond."

As the governors acted to move the project forward they also announced new oversight from the Oregon and Washington legislatures and the two state treasurers. They have asked their legislators and treasurers to immediately begin working with the Departments of Transportation to review and refine the financing plan and toll revenue assumptions. This bi-state collaborative approach will minimize financial risks and provide accountability and oversight as the project moves toward construction.

Project next steps include:

- Update project cost estimates to incorporate deck truss design (Spring 2011)
- Add architect(s) to the project team and establish architectural specifications for a bridge design contract (Spring 2011)
- Work with Project Sponsors Council to publish the Final Environmental Impact Statement (Summer 2011)
- Receive federal Record of Decision (Late 2011)
- Start construction (2013)

Note: Additional information is available online:

http://www.columbiarivercrossing.org/FileLibrary/GeneralProjectDocs/Gov_BridgeRecommend.pdf

About the project

CRC is a long-term, comprehensive project to reduce congestion, enhance mobility and improve safety on I-5 between SR 500 in Vancouver, Wash., and Columbia Boulevard in Portland. The project will replace the I-5 bridge, extend light rail to Vancouver, improve closely-spaced interchanges and enhance the pedestrian and bicycle path between the two cities. The project will be funded by federal and state sources, as well as future tolls. Additional project information may be found online: www.ColumbiaRiverCrossing.org.

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