



Purpose and Need Statement

Problem Summary and Development Process

The local community of the White Salmon and Bingen areas have identified over recent years problems and concerns as related to the existing Columbia River Bridge. These problems and concerns include the lack of bicycle and pedestrian facilities, structural adequacy of the existing bridge, adequate maintenance, long lines accessing the bridge, substandard narrow travel lanes which are perceived to be unsafe and uncertainty of the remaining service life.

The SR-35 Columbia River Bridge Feasibility Study exists as a result of a local regional grass roots effort by a wide range of individuals who are interested in the near and distant future of the White Salmon, Bingen and Hood River region. This effort received support of the Washington State Legislature and of Washington State's House of Representatives delegation in Washington D.C..

This Purpose and Need Statement was developed through a collaborative public and stakeholder process. Individual stakeholder meetings were held cumulating with a public meeting/workshop. Approximately 60 individuals who shared over 100 comments dealing with the existing bridge and a potential new crossing attended this public meeting. These comments were categorized and summarized and are the corner stone of this Purpose and Need Statement. It is important to emphasize that the feasibility study will address the problems identified through the scoping phase public outreach effort regardless of whether the problems are documented problems, perceived problems or potential future problems.

Vision Statement

Preserve the natural beauty of the Columbia River Gorge with a new or improved bridge that supports the region's diverse economy and provides safe travel capacity for automobiles, trucks, recreation vehicles, river traffic, pedestrians and bicycles.

Mission Statement

The SR-35 Columbia River Crossing Feasibility Study will provide the information on the operation and maintenance necessary for the current bridge drawing upon existing studies and information, and provide improvement alternatives to build consensus on an implementation approach to ensuring a suitable Columbia River crossing for the 21st century.

Purpose and Need Statement

Problems and needs associated with the existing bridge, identified by the public, include the lack of bicycle and pedestrian facilities, structural adequacy of the existing bridge, adequate maintenance, long lines accessing the bridge, substandard narrow travel lanes perceived to be unsafe, financial hardships and fairness of paying a toll and uncertainty of the remaining service life.

In order to address these problems and needs, the purpose of the feasibility study is to address the following two general categories;

1. Address perceived problems with the adequacy, operation and maintenance of the existing bridge for the **short-term**.
2. Analyze impacts and find solutions to provide a cross-river transportation link for the **long-term**.

Short Term Analysis

Key short-term issues focused around the existing bridge that the grass roots constituency has identified are;

Safety issues – narrow travel lanes, no sidewalks or bicycle lanes, dangerous intersections, river traffic, seismic vulnerability, ability to carry new larger vehicles and traffic back-ups during rush hours.

Operations issues - Collection and use of tolls, long traffic lines, traffic delays due to maintenance work, noise.

Maintenance concerns - Structural degradation, maintenance of approach roads, perceived lack of maintenance.

The feasibility study will utilize existing studies and information to summarize the current state of the existing bridge with emphasis on these three areas. General recommendations will be developed addressing these short-term issues.

Long Term Analysis

Recognition of the critical role that a reliable river crossing plays in the economy of the area requires analysis of, and planning for, future river crossing needs. Long term analysis will consider continued use of the existing bridge as well as a new river crossing. Laying the foundation for future planning requires:

- Projecting future traffic demands
- Assessing economic value and benefits of a new crossing
- Estimating the functional and structural lifespan of the current bridge utilizing existing studies and information
- Exploring the possibilities of modifying the current bridge
- Investigating location, constructibility, ownership and cost implications of new bridge options.
- Identifying and screening the environmental impact, aesthetic, and regulatory issues of new bridge options
- Evaluating the economic impacts of alternative crossing operations and management scenarios
- Evaluation of multi-modal transportation needs
- Identifying financing options
- Comparing future crossing alternatives

As part of both the short term and long term analysis, existing statutory and or legislative requirements of maintaining a river crossing at the existing area will be investigated. Assessment of the impacts under a scenario where a river crossing is not present will not be addressed in the feasibility study. The study and associated public outreach during its development will develop objective evaluations of and feasible solutions to the above items. This should result in local consensus on the long-term approach for providing a reliable river crossing which meets the region's transportation needs.

Outcomes

The desired outcomes of the feasibility study are; 1) an increased understanding of the current and future river crossing conditions and needs, 2) agreement on short term status and recommendations and 3) local consensus and momentum to work toward long term crossing solutions. The feasibility study will be implemented in phases with each phase containing clearly defined decision criteria on whether or not to proceed with the next phase.

Products

The feasibility study will develop the following products;

- Short term operations, management and maintenance status report and general recommendations necessary to achieve a 20 year service life from the existing bridge
- Individual results reports addressing key individual issues surrounding the long term analysis efforts
- Visual simulations of the viable crossing alternatives
- A range of financing and ownership strategies to fund the project, retire the debt and operate and maintain the crossing
- Location and alignment studies
- Alternative transportation mode analysis
- Screening of environmental issues for each solution alternative
- Economic development impacts from viable solution alternatives
- Recommendation of the preferred long term solution
- Implementation strategy for short and long term recommendations and solutions
- Executive summary of feasibility study focused on general public audience
- Comprehensive technical summary report of the feasibility study
- Cost of alternatives