



MEMORANDUM

TO: Southwest Washington Regional Transportation Council Board of Directors
FROM: Matt Ransom, Executive Director
DATE: January 31, 2017 
SUBJECT: **Designation of I-5 Bridge Replacement as a Project of Statewide Significance – Resolutions (Discussion)**

ATA GLANCE

The Board of Directors previously requested a discussion pertaining to a Resolution designating an I-5 bridge replacement project as a Project of Statewide Significance. This memorandum presents additional background and Resolutions for review and consideration as requested at the January Board meeting.

BACKGROUND

At the November 1, 2016 RTC Board meeting, the Board agreed to discuss a Resolution introduced under Board Business. That Resolution, prepared by citizen advocates, asks that the RTC Board recommend that the State of Washington designate an I-5 Bridge Replacement project as a “Project of Statewide Significance”. The statutory framework for said designation is found in RCW 43.157.

The Board was briefed on this topic at both December and January meetings. At the January Board meeting, the Board requested that two resolutions be drafted for Board review and consideration. Since the January meeting, staff have been consulting with members and other stakeholders and completed additional background investigation. New and relevant information has been come forward and is summarized in the following section.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Project of Statewide Significance

Since the January RTC Board meeting, additional information has been gathered relative to the statute and administrative code regulating designation of projects of statewide significance using the process of RCW 43.157 and WAC 13-30-010. The statute and administrative code defines the parameters that will qualify an applicant and the scope of the application criteria. As written, the criteria for designation are very specific and require both public and private sector participation.

It is believed that there is some flexibility in interpreting the statute, or that the Legislature itself might possess some discretion in a formal project designation process. However, lack of clarity on those issues finds that staff is unable to provide clear guidance regarding formal designation under the provisions of RCW 43.157.

However, the RTC Board and other jurisdictions are not bound by the process of RCW 43.157, if they so choose to support a specific designation. The RTC could choose to support a Resolution stating support for designating an I-5 bridge replacement project as a *Project of Statewide Significance*, by an appropriate governing body.

Appropriations Limitations

After further review and consultation, it has become more clear that the current state transportation appropriations bill proviso language will expire on June 30, 2017.

State of Washington - Executive Branch Priorities

On December 30, 2016, Governor Inslee sent a letter to the National Governors Association (NGA) to support funding of 5 priority projects in Washington State. The catalyst for this letter was a request from the White House Transition Team (to the National Governor's Association) wherein the White House requested (from the NGA) a list of priority projects that could benefit from immediate federal investment. Among the 5 projects submitted by Governor Inslee was a project titled "Washington seismically at-risk bridge replacement". The project description is noted as follows: *(A copy of the letter is attached.)*

Washington seismically at-risk bridge replacement: *Federal investment is required to replace decades-old, seismically-vulnerable structures on key transportation corridors traversed by millions each year in the Pacific Northwest, like the I-5 Bridge Replacement project in Vancouver, and at US-2 Trestle in Everett. These investments are especially critical to the region's concerted efforts to build seismic resilience. Projects require \$3 billion and \$1 billion, respectively.*

As of the date of publication of this memo no new national infrastructure funding or investment program has been formally introduced by neither the President nor Congress.

RESOLUTIONS

RTC's existing Board policy and project priorities are expressed in the current Regional Transportation Plan (2014). The two Resolutions re-affirm existing regional intent which is to progress towards the funding and construction of an I-5 Bridge replacement project within the 20-year planning horizon.

A summary of each of the Resolutions is noted below:

Resolution 02-17-03: *To support designation of an I-5 Bridge Replacement Project as a Project of Statewide Significance.*

Resolution 02-17-04: *To support clearing of impediments in law to funding a future I-5 Bridge Replacement Project.*

POLICY IMPLICATION

The proposed Resolutions fall within the parameters of current RTC Board policy and authority. As proposed, the Resolutions would act as an RTC Board statement of support to external parties for advancing a project already identified as a priority in RTC planning documents. No additional refinements to policy are needed in support of the proposed Resolutions.

BUDGET IMPLICATION

None as Proposed. The proposed Resolutions do not materially affect the RTC's current Work Program or Budget (2017). However, should funding be set aside for new project efforts related to an I-5 Bridge replacement project, then RTC staff would assess at that time the nature and scope of RTC's direct involvement in any future project effort.

NEXT STEPS

At the February 7 Board meeting provide further input and direction.

Attachments:

Resolutions

Letter from Washington Governor, Jay Inslee, December 30, 2016

SOUTHWEST WASHINGTON REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION COUNCIL

RESOLUTION 02-17-03

**RESOLUTION RECOMMENDING TO THE STATE OF WASHINGTON THAT A FUTURE
I-5 BRIDGE REPLACEMENT PROJECT BE DESIGNATED AS A TRANSPORTATION
PROJECT OF STATEWIDE SIGNIFICANCE**

WHEREAS, the I-5 bridge is designated as part of a national defense interstate highway system serving the west coast from Canada to Mexico, including Oregon and Washington and is the primary interstate corridor serving the Portland/Vancouver metropolitan area; and

WHEREAS, bi-state crossing projects, such as an I-5 bridge replacement project, will involve collaboration of both states, regional agencies, and public and private actors within each state; and,

WHEREAS, travel time conditions along the I-5 Corridor in Vancouver continue to deteriorate, and total traffic crossings of the Columbia River bridges on I-5 hit an all-time high, as measured and reported by the Regional Transportation Council's Congestion Monitoring Report (2016); and,

WHEREAS, existing traffic congestion in the I-5 bridge corridor is negatively impacting the economies of Southwest Washington and the Portland metropolitan area, including businesses and industries that are designated industries of regional and statewide significance; and,

WHEREAS, lack of project planning and funding for an I-5 bridge replacement project means continued congestion and delays in the corridor for general traffic, freight mobility, and emergency responders for the forthcoming future; and,

WHEREAS, an I-5 bridge replacement project is subject to being designated as a Project of Statewide Significance.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, by the Board of Directors of the Southwest Washington Regional Transportation Council (RTC) that RTC recommends that the State of Washington designate a future I-5 Bridge Replacement as a Project of Statewide Significance.

ADOPTED this _____ day of _____ 2017,

by the Southwest Washington Regional Transportation Council.

SOUTHWEST WASHINGTON
REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION COUNCIL

ATTEST:

Jeanne E. Stewart
Chair of the Board

Matt Ransom
Executive Director

SOUTHWEST WASHINGTON REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION COUNCIL

RESOLUTION 02-17-04

**A RESOLUTION SUPPORTING CLEARING OF IMPEDIMENTS IN LAW TO FUNDING
A FUTURE I-5 BRIDGE REPLACEMENT PROJECT**

WHEREAS, The Regional Transportation Plan (2014) identifies a project to replace the I-5 bridges as a regional project priority; and,

WHEREAS, it is consistent with the Regional Transportation Plan (2014), and in the public safety, health and welfare, to advance work towards a future replacement of the I-5 bridges and associated improvements in the I-5 corridor; and,

WHEREAS, travel time conditions along the I-5 Corridor in Vancouver continue to deteriorate, and total traffic crossings of the Columbia River bridges on I-5 hit an all-time high, as measured and reported by the Regional Transportation Council's Congestion Monitoring report (2016); and,

WHEREAS, an effect of the lack of project planning and funding for an I-5 bridge(s) replacement project results in continued traffic congestion in the corridor for the forthcoming future; and,

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, by the Board of Directors of the Southwest Washington Regional Transportation Council (RTC) that RTC supports clearing of impediments in current law which precludes the planning, funding, and construction of a future I-5 bridge replacement project.

ADOPTED this _____ day of _____ 2017,

by the Southwest Washington Regional Transportation Council.

SOUTHWEST WASHINGTON
REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION COUNCIL

ATTEST:

Jeanne E. Stewart
Chair of the Board

Matt Ransom
Executive Director



December 30, 2016

Mr. Scott Pattison
Executive Director
National Governors Association
444 North Capitol St, Ste. 267
Washington, DC 20001

RE: Request for Infrastructure Projects from Transition Team

Dear Director Pattison:

Thank you for reaching out to governors' offices to solicit their input on projects that could benefit from potential increased federal infrastructure investment. Washington State's infrastructure needs are significant, much like the rest of the nation's. In response to the request you received from the White House Transition Team, please find attached a list of 5 projects submitted by the State of Washington, which fit the necessary criteria and could benefit from immediate federal investment.

Our state has made considerable progress investing in our infrastructure in recent years. In 2015, Governor Inslee worked with the State Legislature to enact the largest transportation investment plan in state history. This \$16 billion "Connecting Washington" plan addresses critical maintenance and safety needs around the state, supports more than 200,000 jobs, and funds projects that relieve congestion, improve freight mobility and provide more clean transportation choices. The Governor's proposed 2017-19 state budget also proposes bold new investments in Washington's infrastructure, including funding for transportation, water resources and quality, electricity grid modernization, ecosystem restoration, affordable housing, education, public health and human services facilities, and much more. These investments are critical to sustaining and building upon our state's economic growth, which is among the strongest in the nation.

At the same time, our nation's greatest infrastructure achievements have been a result of a strong federal-state partnership. The need for increased federal infrastructure investment is clear and could very quickly provide meaningful benefits for our state's economy and public safety, as well as for the nation as a whole.

Please note that the appended list does not constitute the totality of our infrastructure priorities; state agencies have identified dozens of other projects that are important for our local communities, our state, and the nation, and that could benefit from federal funding. To help us address these needs, and the similar needs of states around the country, we hope to work with the NGA to help shape any potential federal infrastructure investment program.



Mr. Scott Pattison
December 30, 2016
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Thank you again for your efforts in this endeavor.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sam Ricketts". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Sam Ricketts
Director, Washington, DC Office
Office of Governor Jay Inslee

Enclosure

cc: Tiffany Shackelford, Director, Communications & Strategic Planning, National Governors Association
Anna Davis, Director of Government Relations, National Governors Association

Washington infrastructure projects

	Project	Sector	State	Revenue Stream
1	Washington seismically at-risk bridge replacement	Highways and Bridges	WA/OR	Yes
2	I-405/SR-522 widening	Highways and Bridges	WA	Yes
3	Safe drinking water projects	Statewide Initiative	WA	Yes
4	Sound Transit Light Rail acceleration	Mass Transit/Rail	WA	Yes
5	Transportation system electrification and modernization	Statewide Initiative	WA	Yes

- 1) **Washington seismically at-risk bridge replacement:** Federal investment is required to replace decades-old, seismically-vulnerable structures on key transportation corridors traversed by millions each year in the Pacific Northwest, like the I-5 Bridge Replacement project in Vancouver, and at the US-2 Trestle in Everett. These investments are especially critical to the region’s concerted efforts to build seismic resilience. Projects require \$3 billion and \$1 billion, respectively.
- 2) **I-405/SR-522 widening:** Federal investment would help increase capacity, reduce congestion, improve safety and enhance efficiency along one of of the most congested transportation corridors in Washington State. Estimated project cost: \$450 million.
- 3) **Safe drinking water projects:** The Washington State Department of Health has identified 75 shovel-ready drinking water projects requiring \$149 million to upgrade drinking water systems in communities across the state. Federal investment would be critical to protecting safe drinking water supplies in the region.
- 4) **Sound Transit Light Rail acceleration:** Voters have supported major light rail expansion programs in the central Puget Sound region that will improve mobility for millions of people, but it will take decades to fully build it. Federal support for the \$2.3 billion Lynnwood Link, \$1.9 billion Federal Way Link, and \$3.7 billion Redmond Link projects will accelerate delivery of this critical infrastructure.
- 5) **Transportation system electrification and modernization:** Federal investment is needed to fund a package of shovel-ready electric vehicle charging stations, incentives, connected infrastructure and grid upgrades that will accelerate the electrification and modernization of our state’s transportation system, increase energy security, and reduce pollution. Estimated project cost: \$2 billion.