



Bringing Oregonians Together

Willamette River Bridge



Rendering of proposed I-5 Willamette River Bridge courtesy of the Oregon Department of Transportation

“The Willamette River bridge project is a great example of citizens working with ODOT to achieve results that meet the required standards, while reflecting local community values.” –Sonny Chickering, ODOT Area Manager, Lane County

Timeline

January 2009 – October 2010

Region

Willamette Valley

Participants

Cities of Eugene and Springfield; Lane County; Oregon Department of Transportation; Federal Highway Administration; Kalapuya Tribe; Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde; Wilamalane Parks and Recreation; Whilamut Natural Area; Local neighborhood associations of Harlow, Laurel Hill, Springfield, Glenwood, Fairmount

Project Lead

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Facilitators

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Background

In 2002, cracks identified in the Interstate 5 Willamette River Bridge bordering Eugene and Springfield required re-routing of heavy trucks 200 miles out of their way. A temporary bridge built in 2004 provided an interim solution, but did not meet standards for permanent bridges. As part of the Oregon Transportation Investment Act of 2003, funds were dedicated to replace the Willamette River Bridge, and construction of the new bridge began in May 2009.

Oregon Consensus facilitated the Willamette River Bridge Project Development Team and Community Advisory Group and designed and guided community engagement processes. At the end of the environmental assessment phase, facilitation was transitioned to a local practitioner – John Lively, former Mayor of Springfield.

Issues and challenges

The project involved construction in a sensitive cultural and natural area, and was highly constrained by budget, legislative timelines and limited windows for in-water work. The highly technical nature of the project posed challenges for community influence over bridge design.

Results

Extensive community involvement efforts led to broad agreement about the deck arch bridge design. Hundreds of citizens attended public meetings and over 1000 submitted written comments. Local agency, tribal and community leaders donated hundreds of hours to ensure ongoing public input. Partnerships between designers and Tribal leaders shaped design enhancements that reflect historical and natural features of the area and the area’s first people, the Kalaypuya.

Project delays would have cost the state hundreds of thousands of dollars, but stakeholder involvement expedited problem solving and allowed the bridge project to stay on schedule and within budget.

