What is the I-5 Rose Quarter Improvement Project?

The I-5 Rose Quarter Improvement Project (Project) adds auxiliary lanes and shoulders to reduce congestion and improve safety on the main north-south highway on the west coast and redesigns the multimodal local street network. The Project will smooth traffic flow on I-5 between I-84 and I-405 where three interstates intersect and feature the biggest traffic bottleneck in Oregon. The Project will also improve community connections by redesigning overpasses and reconnecting neighborhood streets, enhancing public spaces, and promoting economic development opportunities.

The Project is led by the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) with the City of Portland as a partner. It is identified as a primary transportation investment in the Oregon State Legislature's House Bill 2017.

What will the Project build?

**A Safer and More Reliable I-5**

- A new ramp-to-ramp connection, known as an auxiliary lane, in each direction on I-5 between I-84 and I-405 for merging and improved connections between interchanges in an area where three interstates come together.
- Wider shoulders in each direction on I-5 between I-84 and I-405 to provide space for disabled vehicles to move out of traffic and allow emergency vehicles to respond more quickly.

**Community Connections**

- Highway covers over I-5 that replace and seismically upgrade existing overpasses and create new community space.
- A new east-west roadway crossing over I-5 to connect NE Hancock Street with N Dixon Street.
- A new bicycle and pedestrian bridge from Clackamas Street to the Rose Quarter entertainment area.
- Local street multimodal improvements, including new separated multi-use paths for people walking, biking, and rolling.

Why do we need the I-5 Rose Quarter Improvement Project?

**I-5 safety and congestion:** I-5 between I-405 and I-84 has 3.5 times more crashes than the statewide average and some of the highest traffic volumes in the state. Auxiliary lanes and wider shoulders will reduce crashes by up to 50 percent and improve congestion and travel flow, saving drivers 2.5 million hours of delay each year.

**Travel reliability:** I-5 in the Rose Quarter has traffic congestion for 12 hours each day. As congestion and safety issues increase, travel on I-5 between I-84 and I-405 becomes less reliable for most of the day. Project improvements will reduce the number of crashes and alleviate congestion, which will improve travel reliability for vehicles on I-5 and, in turn, vehicles on local streets affected by back-up on the Interstate.

**Multimodal enhancements:** Some of the existing pedestrian and bicycle facilities in the Project area are challenging to navigate, such as crossing highway on- or off-ramps, or are undersized or incomplete. Improvements to the local street system will provide protected or separated facilities for people walking, rolling, bicycling, or accessing transit in the Project Area. New overcrossings will provide additional opportunities for people to comfortably cross I-5 where they cannot do so today, increasing options for people moving in and through Albina and the Rose Quarter.
FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

**Broadway/Weidler interchange operations:** The complexity and congestion at the I-5 Broadway/Weidler interchange makes it challenging for automobiles, transit, pedestrians, and bicyclists to get around. The Project will simplify the interchange’s configuration, easing movement for all modes and improving safety for our most vulnerable road users.

**Why is I-5 so important?**

I-5 is the main north-south route moving people and goods and connecting population centers across the west coast of the United States from Mexico to Canada. In the Portland region, I-5 carries the highest number of vehicles. The I-5 connection is critical for businesses moving goods, commuters coming to and from Portland, and locals traveling within the region. With a high crash rate and traffic congestion, reliability on I-5 through the Portland region is degrading. Trips on I-5 are taking longer for everyone. Traffic congestion is directly related to frequent crashes on I-5, which have been increasing and occur most frequently during peak travel periods.

**How will the Project benefit me, my family and friends, or others?**

**Safer for highway travelers:** The Project’s new auxiliary lanes will give drivers more time and space to merge for smoother traffic flow on I-5 and reduce crashes by up to 50 percent. The Project’s new full shoulders will provide space for disabled vehicles to move out of traffic and for emergency responders to pass traffic, which will increase response times. Additionally, new highway crossings will meet current seismic standards and remove the existing seismically vulnerable overpasses.

**Safer for pedestrians and bicyclists:** For those who already – or those who want to – walk, bike, or roll in the Project Area, the new design will increase physical separation between automobiles and pedestrians or people biking. The Project will include new widened and well-lit sidewalks, Americans with Disabilities (ADA)-accessible ramps, marked crosswalks, and widened and improved bicycle facilities.

**More reliable traffic flow:** The Project improvements will save drivers nearly 2.5 million hours of travel time a year on I-5 in the Rose Quarter. With smoother traffic flow people can better predict how long it takes to travel through the region. This also benefits the movement of goods, such as Oregon’s exports and imports, from groceries to technology.

**Enhanced connectivity:** The Project’s new highway crossings for people walking, biking and rolling will improve community access to transit, improve travel connections for neighborhoods divided by I-5, and improve access to the Rose Quarter entertainment district.

**Is ODOT engaging with communities of color and ensuring Project contracting and workforce opportunities are equitable, and in line with diversity objectives for the Agency?**

The Project team is intentionally listening to, informing, engaging, and empowering historically impacted African American communities, as well as communities of color, during the design and future construction phases of this Project. ODOT, with support from the City of Portland, has acted to increase opportunities for a diverse workforce, provide economic benefits for the African American community and communities of color.

In the 1950s and 1960s, construction of I-5, the Veterans Memorial Coliseum, Rose Quarter/Moda Center, Emanuel Hospital, and urban renewal divided and displaced communities in North and Northeast Portland, impacting communities of color, especially African American communities, in the historic Albina neighborhood.
With the I-5 Rose Quarter Improvement Project, ODOT has initiated a process to actively engage affected neighborhoods to find design solutions that reduce some of the barriers created by the construction of these historic projects. ODOT anticipates the Project will generate more opportunities for economic development and redevelopment in the Albina neighborhood.

ODOT hosted “Meet the Primes” matchmaking DBE events to provide networking opportunities, and implements strategies such as small business capacity strengthening, technical assistance and robust performance metrics to hold the construction contractor accountable. Additional strategies include a clear vision and guiding principles, along with engaging a Community Opportunity Advisory Committee (COAC) to help design the workforce development approach. The COAC, convened March 2019, provides constructive feedback and recommendations that will be essential to developing a successful program that maximizes utilization and aims to create economic and redevelopment opportunities.

How will the I-5 Rose Quarter Improvement Project improve traveler safety?

The new auxiliary lanes are designed to separate the slower vehicles entering and exiting the highway from the higher speed vehicles continuing to drive along the highway. Auxiliary lanes are proven to increase safety by providing drivers more time to merge, reducing crashes and congestion. ODOT expects the new auxiliary lanes to reduce the frequency of crashes by up to 50 percent and help ease traffic flow.

The project will also build full shoulders, which will provide space for vehicles to get safely off the roadway and give emergency service vehicles safer and quicker access to an emergency within or beyond the Rose Quarter area.

The multimodal improvements will provide pedestrians and bicyclists separation from automobiles on the local street network. The Project includes new multi-use paths, a pedestrian and bicycle-only bridge across I-5, and multimodal improvements on local streets. The multi-use path on N Williams Avenue will be separated, better protected, and over 30 feet wide – equivalent to the width of three auto travel lanes. The pedestrian and bicycle-only bridge will provide a safe route between Clackamas Street on the east side of I-5 and the Rose Quarter entertainment area on the west side. New multi-use paths between the Hancock Dixon crossing and NE Broadway and at Flint/Vancouver may also be considered based on community input during the design phase.

What is an auxiliary lane?

An auxiliary lane connects an on-ramp directly to the next off-ramp on a highway. With an auxiliary lane, vehicles will not need to merge into the two through lanes of I-5 before exiting. This will reduce rear-end and sideswipe crashes, which are both major causes of delay.

As an example, nearly 99 percent of vehicles that get on I-5 heading south from the Fremont Bridge (I-405) exit at either Broadway, I-84, or Morrison Bridge – all exits within the Project area. With the auxiliary lane, these vehicles connecting from I-405 to the exits within the Project area no longer have to merge in and out of traffic in the two through lanes.

Adding auxiliary lanes and shoulders is expected to reduce crashes up to 50 percent on I-5 and save drivers 2.5 million hours of delay each year.
Why do the highway improvements require the construction of highway covers?

To add auxiliary lanes and shoulders on I-5, the existing bridges over the highway need to be removed, including the roads and supporting columns. To replace the crossings, the Project will add covers over I-5 to make the area more connected, walkable and bike friendly.

What is a highway cover and what are its benefits?

A highway cover is a concrete or steel platform that spans over a highway – much like a wide bridge. The improvements on I-5 require removing and rebuilding the existing bridges crossing over the highway. The Project will build new highway covers to provide space for wide sidewalks, separated bike lanes and roads. Covers also provide opportunity for community and placemaking activities. Through community input and involvement, options such as food carts, public art, public space or other uses will be explored.

The highway covers will be built to current seismic standards, making the structures more resilient than the existing bridges in the event of an earthquake. This will provide critical transportation access for community members and first responders in the event of a major earthquake.

What are the Project’s planned improvements for people walking, rolling or riding a bicycle?

The Project creates more space and new connections for people walking, rolling or riding a bike so all people can travel more safely and conveniently through the Rose Quarter area, cross streets safely, and access transit. ODOT will work closely with the City of Portland to engage the community and incorporate feedback on the design of proposed improvements, including:

- New bridge for people walking, rolling or biking starting at Clackamas Street on the east side of I-5 to the entertainment area. This new bridge will provide a dedicated path over I-5 connecting the Lloyd District with the Rose Quarter and offering an essential link for the future Green Loop.
- New well-lit sidewalks, Americans with Disability Act (ADA) accessible ramps, and high-visibility crosswalks on the local streets in the Rose Quarter Area. This includes incorporating City design guidelines to ensure walking is a safe, accessible, and attractive experience for everyone.
- New connection between NE Hancock Street to N Dixon Street to provide a new multi-modal east-west route to the Lower Albina neighborhood.
- Upgrades to pedestrian and bike facilities on new Broadway-Weidler-Williams and Vancouver-Hancock highway covers, which could include wider sidewalks, improved crosswalks and protected bike lanes.
- Safer access to transit connections with marked crossings at all transit stops.
How will the Project improve local street connectivity?

Project improvements will make local streets better for people walking, biking, and rolling, provide new connections within and between the Central City neighborhoods, and improve connections on and off the highway. The highway covers will create more surface area for street upgrades, wider and protected bicycle and pedestrian facilities, and public spaces. Specifically, the Clackamas bicycle and pedestrian bridge will provide a new connection for people walking and biking between the Lloyd District and Rose Quarter and will offer the Green Loop connection over I-5. The new Hancock-Dixon Crossing also will provide a new roadway connection across I-5 and people driving, walking, and rolling will no longer have to travel through the busy I-5 Broadway/Weidler interchange when going to or coming from downtown, the waterfront, or other destinations west of I-5.

What is the Project’s history and how did we get to where we are today?

Decades of planning have occurred to address the safety and operational needs on I-5 through the Rose Quarter. Beginning in the late 1980s ODOT developed several studies, including the I-5: Greeley-N. Banfield Study (1987) and Modified Concept (1990-96), Portland/Vancouver I-5 Trade Corridor Study (1999), I-5/I-405 Freeway Loop Study (2005), and ODOT/City Practical Design Workshop (2007), to evaluate transportation infrastructure design options.

ODOT and the City reached agreement on a practically designed set of alternatives through the 2010-2012 N/NE Quadrant Plan and I-5 Broadway/Weidler Facility Plan effort. During this effort, together with a 30-member Stakeholder Advisory Committee (SAC), ODOT and the City evaluated over 70 design options and narrowed the scope of freeway improvements to accommodate and incorporate modifications to the local system in line with the City’s land use planning goals. During the 2010-12 planning effort, ODOT and the City engaged with over 2,800 individuals and held 19 full SAC meetings, 14 subcommittee meetings, 4 open houses, and over 85 community briefings and walking tours. In 2012, the Portland City Council and Oregon Transportation Commission adopted the Plans and the recommended design concept, which is now reflected as the I-5 Rose Quarter Improvement Project.

The Project design concept is included in adopted Portland region land use and transportation plans. Metro Council adopted the proposed Project as part of the Regional Transportation Plan in 2014 and again in 2018. Portland City Council adopted the proposed Project into the City’s Central City 2035 Plan and Transportation System Plan in June 2018.

During the I-5 Rose Quarter Improvement Project EA, engagement activities included interviews with Black Portlanders, work with a 14-member Community Liaisons Group to inform outreach, Project presentations at over 100 events and community gatherings, nine public events with 280+ attendees, community walking and biking tours, door-to-door outreach with over 60 businesses, updates via the project website and newsletters, and a 45-day public review and comment period on the draft Environmental Assessment.

How can the community continue to be involved in this Project?

Public involvement and community engagement are essential for the Project’s success. Since its inception in 2010, the Project has included an active public involvement component. Early planning efforts for the N/NE Quadrant (as part of the Adopted Central City 2035 Plan) and I-5 Broadway/Weidler Plans were guided by the unique collaborative partnership between ODOT and the City of Portland, and a 30-person Stakeholder Advisory Committee. This partnership allowed for joint planning and decision-making to develop a design concept for the I-5 Broadway/Weidler interchange that would complement the land use, urban design, and transportation system envisioned for the planning districts of Lower Albina and Lloyd. The Project depends
on additional community input to help refine design and address questions raised during the Environmental Assessment public comment period regarding soil stabilities and the highway cover uses.

In 2020, ODOT and City of Portland staff will be out in the community and hosting events to hear from the community and address questions raised during the Environmental Assessment process and review period.

In early 2020, ODOT and the City of Portland collected applications for membership on a Community Advisory Committee (CAC) to discuss detailed designs of the pedestrian and bike facilities and surface street connections, a Project equity strategy and planning for construction.

Join the Project’s email list to get notifications about upcoming events and ways to stay involved - http://i5rosequarter.org/contact/

Find ways to stay involved throughout the Project’s design and construction process by visiting the Project website at www.i5RoseQuarter.org, attending an event or contacting the Project team directly at info@i5RoseQuarter.org or 503.470.3127.

Can details of the Project still be changed?

Yes. Community involvement is needed to shape the Project design decisions. The Project concept is defined – but there is much work to be done during the design phase. Throughout the design process, ODOT wants to hear from the community. There will be several opportunities for feedback through community events, open houses, online surveys, a community advisory committee (CAC), an urban design subcommittee, and urban design charrettes at which the public can provide input on cover design and connections.

How is this Project funded?

Partial funding for design and construction was provided by House Bill 2017, Keep Oregon Moving. The Oregon Legislature authorized $30 million per year in spending for the Project, beginning in January 2022, based on an estimated project cost of approximately $450 to $500 million (in 2017 dollars).

To meet Section 27c requirements of House Bill 2017, the Project team provided a cost-to-complete (CTC) report to the Legislature in January 2020.

When will construction start, how long will it take, and how will construction impact traffic?

Depending on the outcome of the environmental review process, construction is anticipated to start in 2023 and last about 4-5 years. ODOT will work closely with businesses in the Project Area to implement strategies to limit disruption to businesses during construction, including maintaining event access to Moda Center during construction. ODOT will also develop a comprehensive transportation management plan that will document construction staging and schedule, alternate routes for all modes of travel during road closure, and lane closure restrictions, as well as transportation management and operation strategies.

What are the impacts to private property?

The Project design analyzed in the Environmental Assessment was intended to minimize impacts to private property and displacement. Most of the planned Project improvements are within existing ODOT right-of-way and, as a result, the Project will impact only a minimal amount of private property. No residential uses would be displaced by the Project as evaluated in the Environmental Assessment.
What impact will the I-5 Rose Quarter Improvement Project have on air quality and greenhouse gas emissions?

The Environmental Assessment (EA), released on February 15, 2019, using the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency’s (EPA) air emissions modeling tool, found that air quality and greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions will slightly improve with the Project compared to not building the Project. Once the Project is built, the reduction in emissions and improved air quality will be due to the improved traffic flow, and less idling on the highway, and reduced congestion from the project.