



I-5 Rose Quarter Improvement Project: Frequently Asked Questions

Revised September 2020

What is the I-5 Rose Quarter Improvement Project?

The I-5 Rose Quarter Improvement Project is committed to supporting a safer, more just and inclusive Albina community and greater Portland region. The project will make local, regional, and international travel more predictable and reduce frequent crashes on the I-5 corridor, supporting Oregon's economy, and will create new community connections to support future economic development. We must ensure the historic Albina community benefits from the investment of this project.

The project will improve community places, spaces, and connections. It will reimagine highway overpasses to complement local street improvements that reconnect neighborhood streets. It will enhance public spaces while supporting opportunities for economic development and wealth generation for the Black community, including land redevelopment opportunities. On I-5, the project will add auxiliary lanes and shoulders to improve travel reliability and safety and will smooth traffic flow between I-84 and I-405 where three interstates meet at the top traffic bottleneck in Oregon.

The project is led by the Oregon Department of Transportation. The Oregon State Legislature identified the project as a key transportation investment in 2017.

What will the project build?

Community Connections

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

A Safer and More Reliable I-5

- **A new ramp-to-ramp connection, or auxiliary lane, in each direction on I-5 between I-84 and I-405** to reduce motor vehicle weaving. This means safer merging and improved connections between interchanges in an area where three interstates meet.
- **Wider shoulders** in each direction on I-5 between I-84 and I-405. This will provide space for disabled motor vehicles to move out of traffic, allow emergency vehicles to respond to emergencies more quickly, and help buses avoid congestion and maintain reliability.

How will the project benefit me and the community?

Economic opportunity: In the 1950s and 1960s, ODOT's construction of I-5 divided and displaced the historic Albina community, specifically Portland's Black community. We recognize that this action and other urban developments took generational wealth and opportunity in the Albina community. Other public agency and private developments, including the Moda Center, Veteran's Memorial Coliseum, the Convention Center, Legacy Emanuel Hospital, and other urban renewal efforts also contributed to the historic harm. To address this, we are committed to elevating the voices of the historically harmed Albina community to understand the needs of and provide benefit to this community. We will identify, encourage and facilitate opportunities for agency and community partnerships. Together with agency and community partners, the project can support future economic development in the Albina community and support wealth generation through creating opportunities for partnerships around land banking, workforce and business development, and other means.

Community connections for the future: The project provides an opportunity to reconnect the community and support a sense of place and space consistent with local visions for transformation.

We are committed to building highway covers that bridge both sides of the I-5 corridor in this area and provide new community space. Only after hearing how the community envisions the look and feel of the highway covers and the streets and sidewalks to which they connect, the project will once again connect sections of this historic neighborhood and provide economic growth and development opportunities.

Our hope is that building highway covers will be a catalyst for us to work with other project partners to transform what exists today into a socially and economically inclusive community – one that is connected to the river and its surrounding neighborhoods.

Local street enhancements: Some of the existing pedestrian and bicycle facilities in the project area are undersized, incomplete, or challenging to navigate, such as crossing highway on- or off-ramps. Changes to the local street system will provide protected or separated sidewalks and bike lanes to create safe connections for people walking, rolling, bicycling, or riding transit in the Project area. New highway overcrossings, such as the Clackamas Bicycle and Pedestrian Crossing, will provide additional options 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.

Safety for pedestrians and bicyclists: For those who already – or those who want to – walk, bike, or roll in the project area, the new vision for local streets will increase physical separation between automobiles and pedestrians or people biking. The project will include new widened and well-lit sidewalks, Americans with Disabilities-accessible ramps, marked crosswalks, and widened and improved bicycle facilities that also provide more comfortable and convenient access to transit.

I-5 safety and congestion: The section of I-5 between I-84 and I-405 has the highest crash rate of any Oregon urban interstate. By providing new shoulders and continuous auxiliary lanes in both directions of I-5, the project will reduce motor vehicles weaving in and out of lanes and

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provide areas for disabled motor vehicles to pull over or emergency responders to get around heavy traffic. Auxiliary lanes and wider shoulders will reduce crashes by up to 50% and improve congestion and travel flow, saving drivers and those riding bus transit 2.5 million hours of delay each year.

Travel reliability: There is traffic congestion on I-5 in the Rose Quarter area for 12 hours each day. Increased congestion and safety issues on I-5 between I-84 and I-405 means drivers experience delay and travel is less reliable for most of the day. Project features will reduce the number of crashes and improve travel reliability for vehicles on I-5 and, in turn, vehicles on local streets affected by back-up on the Interstate. This also benefits the movement of goods, such as Oregon's exports and imports, from groceries to technology.

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 users and improving safety for our most vulnerable road users.

How will the project improve safety?

We are committed to the health and safety of the community in all aspects of the project.

Whether it is building shoulders for emergency vehicles, fixing local streets to reduce conflict between motor vehicles making the streets safer for school children to get to and from school, or improving air quality and reducing greenhouse gas emissions, safety is always top of mind and will remain our priority.

We are committed to the safety of the students of Harriet Tubman Middle School. This project will not build on school property. Proposed design elements may eliminate through traffic in front of the school, making the surrounding local streets safer for students who walk or bike to school. The project proposes constructing a sound wall between I-5 and the school (within ODOT property) that would reduce traffic noise levels to below current levels. The project also plans on constructing a retaining wall between the school and I-5 to improve the soil stability and the safety of the school's structure in the event of an earthquake.

Local street improvements will offer greater visibility, protection, and access to people walking and biking, making streets safer. The project includes new multi-use paths, a pedestrian- and bicycle-only bridge across I-5, and improvements on local streets for all users such as well-lit sidewalks, Americans with Disabilities Act curb ramps, and buffered bikeways. The multi-use path on N Williams Avenue will be separated from vehicles, better protected, and over 30 feet wide – equivalent to the width of three auto travel lanes. The new pedestrian and bicycle-only bridge will provide a safe route between Clackamas Street on the east side of I-5 and the Rose Quarter on the west side. New multi-use paths between the Hancock-Dixon crossing and NE Broadway at Flint/Vancouver may also be considered based on community input during the design phase.

New auxiliary lanes are designed to separate slower vehicles entering and exiting the highway from higher speed vehicles driving on the highway. Auxiliary lanes are proven to increase safety by providing drivers more time to merge, reducing rear-end and sideswipe crashes, and congestion. We expect the new auxiliary lanes to reduce the frequency of crashes by up to 50%, easing traffic flow, and saving drivers and people taking bus transit 2.5 million hours of delay each year.

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.** Full shoulders will also provide opportunity to implement “bus on shoulder.” Bus on shoulder is a strategy to improve bus service by allowing transit to use the highway shoulders. It removes buses from congestion and results in faster travel times and reliability.

How can I help shape the project? Can details of the project still be changed?

Yes! The project is in the very early stages of design and there is still a lot of work to be done. While the project’s general concept is defined, we need the community to shape the project’s design. Throughout the design process, we want to hear from you. There are several opportunities for feedback through community events, open houses, online surveys, public committee meetings, and urban design charrettes at which the public can provide input. Find ways to stay involved by checking out the [events](#) page on the [project website](#) and sign up for the project newsletter by e-mailing info@I5RoseQuarter.org or calling (503) 470-3127.

Now that the Oregon Transportation Commission has provided direction on the project’s environmental review process, what happens next?

In April 2020, the Oregon Transportation Commission directed ODOT staff to continue working with federal, regional and local partners to complete the Environmental Assessment process for the I-5 Rose Quarter Improvement Project, as a requirement of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). The Environmental Assessment, an in-depth analysis of the project’s benefits and impacts, was published in Spring 2019. Community engagement and technical information will continue to inform the project’s design. Next, ODOT, in partnership with the Federal Highway Administration, will publish the final NEPA decision document. The final

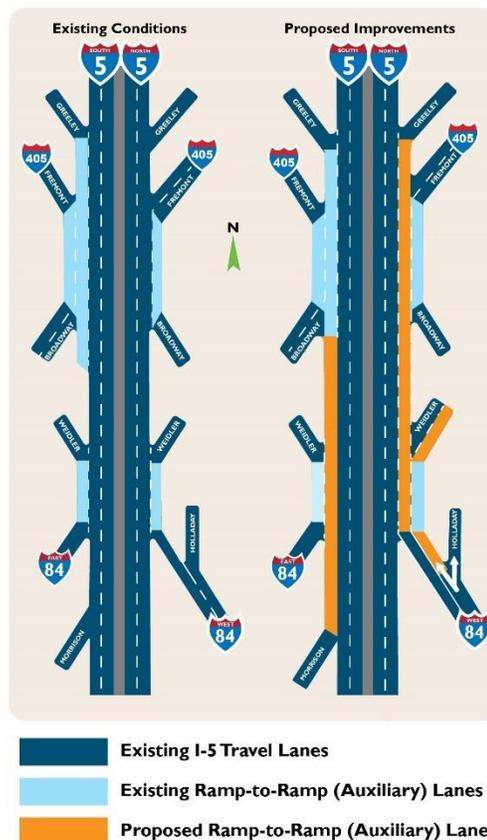


Figure 1. Proposed auxiliary lanes

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decision document will allow us to move into the design phase, and answer and address the community's questions regarding the project's design.

The project team will conduct further design refinement of the proposed highway covers and other elements in 2020, in collaboration with our partners. Public input on the project can be offered and discussed in public committee meetings, discussion groups, surveys, open houses and briefings for community organizations, among other activities.

What is the project's transportation planning history?

Beginning in the late 1980s, ODOT developed several studies to evaluate transportation design options to address congestion on I-5. These included 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).

ODOT and the City of Portland reached agreement on a set of alternatives through the 2010-2012 N/NE Quadrant Plan and I-5 Broadway/Weidler Facility Plan effort. During that process, together with a 30-member Stakeholder Advisory Committee, ODOT and the City evaluated over 70 design options. We narrowed the scope of design options to be consistent with, and not to preclude, the City's land use planning goals. ODOT and the City talked with more than 2,800 individuals and held 19 Stakeholder Advisory Committee meetings, 14 subcommittee meetings, four 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 known as the I-5 Rose Quarter Improvement Project.

The project design concept is included in region land use and transportation plans adopted by the City of Portland. 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 Environmental Assessment, public engagement opportunities included the following: interviews with Portland-based African Americans:

- work with a 14-member Community Liaisons Group to inform outreach
- project presentations at more than 100 events and community gatherings
- nine public events with over 280 attendees
- community walking and biking tours
- door-to-door outreach with more than 60 businesses
- updates via the Project website and newsletters
- a 45-day public review and comment period on the draft Environmental Assessment.

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

There is still a lot of work to be done. We look forward to continued collaboration with the community to design the project that is right for you.

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We are committed to ensuring Black community members and leaders living, working, or with historic ties to the Albina neighborhood and broader N/NE Portland are able to participate in and actively shape the Project.

You will continue to see us online in active and meaningful conversations with people, with a focus on the Black community. We will use traditional and creative techniques, such as mailers and phone calls and working with community-based organizations and faith-based communities, to meet communities where they are. We want to foster a two-way dialogue that demonstrates how our conversations contribute to project decision-making.

Through our outreach, we commit to empowering our community with support of local, regional, and state government to influence project decisions and determine outcomes. We want you to hold us accountable for those outcomes. To do so, we are going to bring people with diverse backgrounds and expertise together to expand our community understanding. We will ensure the project addresses past harm with a present and future local, regional and state transportation system that meets community needs in a way that enables them to thrive.

We'll be sharing information on the project and upcoming events in the mail, on our website, and in social media platforms. Stay tuned and please share these opportunities with your friends, colleagues, and networks – we need your help to make this a project for our community, by our community.

Join the project's email list to get notifications about upcoming events and ways to stay involved: <http://i5rosequarter.org/contact/>

You can also find ways to stay involved throughout the project's design and construction process by visiting our website at www.i5RoseQuarter.org, attending an event or contacting the project team directly at info@i5RoseQuarter.org or (503) 470-3127.

How is ODOT engaging with communities of color?

We recognize the role that ODOT played in the generational wealth and opportunity that was taken from the historic Albina community, specifically Portland's Black community, by construction of I-5. I-5 and other public agency and private developments including the Moda Center, Veteran's Memorial Coliseum, the Convention Center, Legacy Emanuel Hospital, and other urban renewal efforts all contributed to the historic harm.

To address this, ODOT is committed to elevating the voices of the historically harmed Albina community. We will work to understand the needs of and provide benefit to this community. We will identify, encourage, and facilitate opportunities for agency and community partnerships. Together with agency and community partners, the project can support future development in the Albina community and support wealth generation through creating opportunities for partnerships related to land banking, workforce and business development, and other means.

How is ODOT ensuring project contracting and workforce opportunities are equitable, and in line with diversity objectives for the agency?

We are committed to doing business differently with Disadvantaged Business Enterprise contractors by providing more contracting and, in turn, workforce opportunities than ever before.

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Our top priority is ensuring minorities and women gain the benefit of short-term local workforce trade employment, but also develop the skills through apprenticeships for long-term wealth generation.

With a focus on restorative justice, the project is committed to leveraging deep ties with the historic Albina community to ensure meaningful involvement with Disadvantaged Business Enterprise contractors and using input from the community to help shape the project and outcomes for the community including supporting generational wealth.

The Construction Manager/General Contractor is expected to be on board and under contract in Fall 2020, with substantial work packages for Disadvantaged Business Enterprise contractors as early as next year.

We have also implemented strategies to hold the construction contractor accountable, such as small business capacity strengthening, technical assistance and robust performance metrics. Additional strategies include a clear vision and guiding principles, along with engaging a Community Oversight Advisory Committee to help ODOT in accountability and oversight of the construction team.

The Community Oversight Advisory Committee, convened March 2019, provides oversight and recommendations that will be essential to developing a successful program that maximizes Disadvantaged Business Enterprise and local minority and women in workforce utilization and aims to create economic opportunities by investing in local workers which results in reinvestment by those workers into the local economy.

What is a Construction Manager/General Contractor and why is it important? How is it different from what ODOT has done before?

Construction Manager/General Contractor is an innovative project delivery method where the construction contractor is hired during a project's engineering design phase. This allows the contractor and engineers to collaborate and innovate during design. The construction Manager/General Contractor method was chosen to:

- **Improve Community Partnership.** The contractor is able to work with the community to develop the project's design together.
- **Increase Economic Opportunities.** The contractor is key to unlocking the project's economic opportunities through contracts to Disadvantaged Business Enterprises, building business capacity and jobs for minority workers.
- **Optimize Innovation.** The Construction Manager/General Contractor procurement method encourages the contractor to provide input and innovation in the design process, including identifying cost and schedule risks that can be addressed and reduced during design as a result of the contractor's experience.

ODOT has traditionally used "design-bid-build", where the plans and specifications are completed, then competitively bid—and construction is awarded to the lowest responsive bidder. The Construction Manager/General Contractor process allows the contractor to use a variety of tools, including selecting subcontractors based on qualifications, not just lowest bid.

What is the Executive Steering Committee's role in the project?

ODOT established an Executive Steering Committee in spring 2020 to advise the Oregon Transportation Commission and ODOT on major project decisions. The Executive Steering Committee shapes principles and values to guide the project, design elements such as the highway covers, inclusive public engagement, project financing and delivery, and other project considerations. Oregon Transportation Commission Vice Chair Alando Simpson chairs the Executive Steering Committee, which is facilitated by Dr. Steven Holt.

Learn more about the [Executive Steering Committee](#)'s role on the project's website.

What is the Community Oversight Advisory Committee's role on the project?

ODOT established a Community Oversight Advisory Committee in March 2019 with a focus on the project's Disadvantaged Business Enterprise/On-the-Job Training program. The committee provides constructive feedback and recommendations to ODOT that are essential to developing a successful program that maximizes utilization and aims to create economic and redevelopment opportunities. The committee consists of representatives of multiple interests including racial diversity, diversity of thought, private and public sectors, and members with lived experience, institutional history, a connection with the Project area, and diversity in contracting expertise. The committee facilitator is Johnell Bell.

Learn more about the [Community Oversight Advisory Committee](#)'s role on the project's website.

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. As part of the project, there is the opportunity to replace existing bridges with wider covers over I-5 to reconnect the Albina community, create land to provide more community space, and make the area more pedestrian and bike friendly. We need the community's help to determine the cover's shape and use. Through an Independent Assessment of the highway covers, community input and involvement, options such as food carts, public art, buildings, public space or other uses will be explored that provide opportunities for economic development and wealth creation within the Albina community.

The highway covers will be built to meet current seismic standards to provide critical transportation access for community members and first responders in the event of a major earthquake.

It sounds like you're adding a lane to I-5? Will the new auxiliary lanes increase traffic?

Many factors can contribute to increased traffic, including a community's increasing population or economic growth. Auxiliary lanes are intended to help existing traffic move more smoothly. Nearly 99% of vehicles that get on I-5 at the Fremont Bridge (I-405) and head south exit within about two miles at either Broadway, I-84, or the Morrison Bridge – all exits within the project

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area. With the auxiliary lane, the vehicles traveling from I-405 to the exits within the project area will not have to merge in and out of traffic.

In the Portland Metro area, ODOT has completed or is planning auxiliary lane projects on I-5 and I-205. For example, the new auxiliary lane on I-5 southbound from OR 217 to I-205 addressed the bottleneck on that section of highway and improved upstream traffic as well as traffic on OR 217. The improvements reduced congestion from five hours a day to one hour a day on that section and saves motorists an estimated \$8.4 million of delay each year.

Why is I-5 so important for the traveling public?

I-5 is the main north-south highway moving people and goods and connecting cities and towns across the west coast of the United States from Mexico to Canada. In the Portland region, I-5 carries the highest number of vehicles in the state and is critical for businesses moving goods, commuters coming to and from Portland, and locals traveling within the region. With a high crash rate and significant traffic congestion, reliability on I-5 through the Portland region is degrading. Trips on I-5 are taking longer for everyone.

What are the project's pedestrian and bicycle improvements?

The project creates more space and new connections for people walking and rolling, so all people can travel more safely and conveniently through the Rose Quarter area, cross streets safely, and access transit. It will also maintain and enhance the existing east-west bicycle routes on N Broadway Street and N Weidler Street and north-south routes on N Williams Avenue and N Vancouver Avenue.

We need the community's input to inform the look-and-feel, design, and configurations of each of the proposed pedestrian and bicycle features listed below.

- New pedestrian and bicycle bridge between Clackamas Street on the east side of I-5 and the entertainment area on the west side. It will provide a dedicated path over I-5 for people who walk, bike, and roll, connecting the Lloyd District with the Rose Quarter and offering an essential link for the future Green Loop.
- Upgrades to pedestrian and bicycle facilities on new Broadway-Weidler-Williams and Vancouver-Hancock highway covers, which could include wider sidewalks, improved crosswalks and separated bike lanes.
- New crossing between NE Hancock Street to N Dixon Street to provide a new east-west connection to the Lower Albina neighborhood. This new crossing will include space for separated pedestrian and bicycle paths, creating a safe and more connected travel option for all users.
- New multi-use bicycle and pedestrian path on N Williams Avenue, between N Broadway Street and N Weidler Street to separate people walking and rolling from automobiles.
- New well-lit sidewalks, Americans with Disabilities Act accessible ramps, and high-visibility crosswalks on the local streets in the Rose Quarter Area.

What impact will the I-5 Rose Quarter Improvement Project have on air quality and greenhouse gas emissions?

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

An Environmental Peer Review panel of national technical experts, convened in May 2020, evaluated the air quality, greenhouse gas, and noise technical analyses that were conducted for the Environmental Assessment. The Peer Review Report supported ODOT's findings for air quality, greenhouse gas, and noise impacts for the project. It also provided recommendations to incorporate into the project's future design and construction phases, such as the requirement of low-emission construction equipment including electric vehicles.

We have also heard concern about air quality specifically at Harriet Tubman Middle School. The Environmental Assessment included a specific assessment of highway emissions near the school. The analysis showed that over time, with or without the project, there will be a large decrease in highway emissions because of improved fuel efficiencies in motor vehicles. The difference in emissions between constructing the project and not is minimal, however constructing the project would decrease emissions slightly more. The addition of a new sound wall between I-5 and the school would provide a dispersion barrier for air pollutants coming from traffic on I-5, thereby further improving air quality at the school.

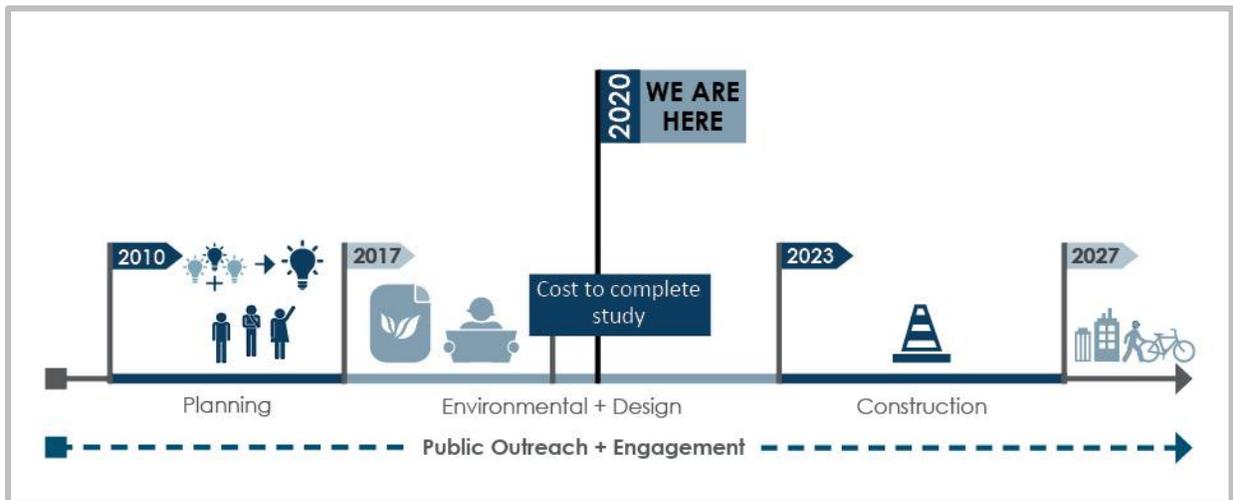
What are the impacts to private property?

It is our intent to minimize impacts to private property and business displacement. Most of the planned project features, including the auxiliary lanes and shoulders on I-5, are within existing ODOT property (i.e., right-of-way). As a result, the project will impact only a minimal amount of private property. The project will not displace any residences.

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

Some components of construction are anticipated to start in late 2021, with the main construction components 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 the Moda Center. ODOT will also develop a comprehensive transportation management plan to document construction staging and schedule, detours or alternate routes for all modes of travel during road and lane closures, as well as transportation management and operation strategies.

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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 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 report to the Legislature in January 2020. The report concluded that the project could cost \$715 million to \$795 million in 2025 dollars (2025 is the projected midpoint of construction). Inflation represents nearly 50% of the total cost change from earlier estimates that were based on 2017 dollars. Other costs stem from added construction elements, utility reimbursements, property acquisitions and higher contingency for unplanned costs.