I-5 Rose Quarter Improvement Project: Frequently Asked Questions

Revised June 2021

Project Background

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.

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 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.
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- **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.

You can learn more about what the project will build [here](#).

**How will the project benefit me and the community?**

Check out our [fact sheet](#) for a summary of the project benefits below.

**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 development 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
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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 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.

**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 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 through 2023, 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 Independent Highway Cover Assessment process? How does that relate to the project?

In response to direction from the Governor and requests from project stakeholders, the Oregon Transportation Commission directed ODOT to retain a consultant team of local and national urban design, engineering, and environmental experts to conduct an independent assessment of the highway cover designs included in the I-5 Rose Quarter Improvement Project. The requests from Metro, Multnomah County, City of Portland, Portland Public Schools and Albina Vision Trust shaped the creation of the independent assessment process. The goal for this independent team is to understand the vision and goals of stakeholders in the project area, generate potential highway cover scenarios, and assess the impacts and benefits of these scenarios.

With influence from the Historic Albina Advisory Board and guidance from the I-5 Rose Quarter Improvement Project’s Executive Steering Committee, the Independent Cover Assessment Team is working directly with Black community members from historic Albina to understand how potential highway covers, delivered as part of the Rose Quarter Improvement Project, can rebuild the neighborhood and better serve the historic Albina Community.

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 it will enhance public spaces while supporting opportunities for economic development, including land redevelopment opportunities.

The highway covers have the potential to add economic value by supporting redevelopment that reconnects the community. An independent cover assessment team is working to develop three design scenarios for the highway covers, considering how to best reconnect the community, promote economic development, and meet the community’s vision for the new space. The proposed highway cover space could be used for affordable housing, local businesses, or community organizations and open spaces that reflect the historic Albina community.

Learn more about the Independent Highway Cover Assessment here.

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 percent 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.

While we know there is a $130 million to $147 million funding gap, total project costs are not yet known. For a better picture of the full cost, we are waiting to get further along in design. Particularly, we are looking forward to hearing from the Historic Albina Advisory Board and Executive Steering Committee on their preferences for the highway covers through their work as part of the Independent Cover Assessment.

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.

Learn more about the project history in this fact sheet.
Community Engagement

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 and sign up for the project newsletter by e-mailing [info@I5RoseQuarter.org](mailto:info@I5RoseQuarter.org) or calling (503) 470-3127.

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.

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](mailto:) to get notifications about upcoming events and ways to stay involved. You can also find ways to stay involved throughout the project’s design and construction process by visiting our [website](#), attending an [event](#) or contacting the project team directly at [info@I5RoseQuarter.org](mailto: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. ODOT acknowledges that agency-level staff does not reflect the historic Albina community. Recognizing this gap, ODOT has empowered the Historic Albina Advisory Board, to elevate historic Albina perspectives in project decision-making, particularly related to the needs and vision of the community for design and development. The project team will look to the Board for advice and recommendations about who the community is that we are connecting and how we can best approach reconnecting the community through the project.

The project team has been working to do business differently and tailor the project’s approach to engagement to better involve the historic Albina community. ODOT has engaged in meaningful dialogue with the African American community and NE Portland neighborhood through a variety of different avenues, including discussion groups; one-on-one conversations; outreach to business owners, religious institutions, schools, and community groups; surveys, tabling, media outlets that publish content for African American audiences, and other platforms or opportunities as identified in these discussions. ODOT will also continue to work with a variety of community-based organizations, stakeholders, businesses, and residents with ties to the African American community and communities of color to help shape design and inform decisions. These conversations will take place both at the policy setting and grassroots levels so that the project’s benefits and impacts are widely known and well understood, with ample opportunities for input.

We will continue to 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.

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 the Historic Albina Advisory Board’s role on the project?

The purpose of the Historic Albina Advisory Board is to elevate voices in the Black community to ensure that project outcomes reflect community interests and values and that historic Albina directly benefits from the investments of this project. The Board brings community perspectives into the project’s decision-making process concerning elements that most directly support community connections, urban design and wealth generation in the Black and historic Albina community. Areas of advice and recommendations include the following:

- Highway cover design responsive to community economic development needs, public health and aesthetic desires.
- Connections between the highway and local streets and paths to improve movements for people within and through the project area.
- Input to partnership opportunities to support community wealth generation through project area re-development, including potential partnerships between ODOT and other agencies, businesses and organizations.

Board members review project information, discuss and deliberate, and provide interest- and value-based advice and recommendations directly to the Executive Steering Committee to substantively inform its recommendations to the Oregon Transportation Commission.

Learn more about the Historic Albina Advisory Board’s role on the project’s website.

Environment

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. Key findings in the study shows that mobile source air toxins and National Ambient Air Quality Standards criteria pollutants are expected to reduce over the next 25 years. This is mostly due
to increasingly tighter emissions standards and regional efforts to control emissions. Key findings on greenhouse gas emissions the project Area shows a 22% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions expected over next 25 years mostly due to fuel efficiency standards and regional efforts to control emissions. Less stop and go traffic, improved traffic flow, less idling on the highway, and reduced congestion also contribute to less greenhouse gas emissions and better air quality.

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.

Learn more about air quality findings in our project fact sheet.

How will the project impact Harriet Tubman Middle School?

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. No significant impacts are anticipated for Harriet Tubman Middle School.

**Air Quality:** Minor temporary air quality impacts would occur within the existing I-5 corridor and surface streets in the immediate vicinity of construction activity. 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.

**Noise:** Construction activities would result in greater temporary noise levels in the immediate vicinity. Near Harriet Tubman Middle School the project proposes a 22-foot-high and approximately 1,011-foot-long noise wall extending along the eastern edge of I-5 right-of-way to shield and reduce noise in the future due to changes in traffic patterns.

**Construction Impacts:** Construction activities near Harriet Tubman Middle School will be scheduled during the summer months to avoid potential disruptions during the school year. Construction activities would result in minor to moderate short-term impacts to traffic; transit operations; and people who walk, bike, and roll. In additional, existing above- and below-ground utilities could be impacted during construction.

We are working with Portland Public Schools and our project partners to explore ways to minimize all of the impacts above (also see “How will air quality be addressed in the project area?” above for more information, as well as our air quality and noise fact sheets).
How will air quality be addressed in the project area? How are the concerns of project partners and the community being addressed?

We have heard the community’s concern over potential impacts from the project related to air quality and greenhouse gas emissions. We have taken the following actions in response:

- We completed an independent review of our air quality, greenhouse gas, and noise environmental analysis.
- We are coordinating with our partners to implement as many best practice recommendations to reduce impacts to air quality and noise, particularly for Harriet Tubman Middle School, as feasible.
- We established the Executive Steering Committee and the Historic Albina Advisory Board to help us with this work and many other project considerations with the goal to elevate voices from the historic Albina community. We use the response matrices included as part of each advisory committee meeting summary to record, track, and respond to committee questions and concerns (including air quality).
- We have included project partners at every level in our project governance structure (even down to the technical leadership teams) to ensure feedback is directly reflected in design and construction considerations. We are also coordinating with our partners in many other ways, such as briefings, staff meetings and one-on-one connections.
- We are working on performance measures that will be refined with input from community and deliberated by our advisory committees as to how we will approach and track project success. These measures will continue to hold us accountable to our desired outcomes.
- We will continue working with partners and community members to identify solutions to reflect the project values in design. We have already taken action to restripe rather than widen the highway at the south end to avoid impacts to the Eastbank Esplanade and the river, modify the Hancock Crossing in support of affordable housing, and through working with Portland Public Schools on the southbound realignment with the benefit of avoiding potential air quality and noise impacts to Harriet Tubman Middle School.

Discussions about air quality with our advisory committees started in March (view the presentations at the Executive Steering Committee March 22 meeting and the Historic Albina Advisory Board March 16 meeting and April 6 meeting). The topics include:

- Reviewing the NEPA analysis and peer review report
- Air quality analysis near the highway cover
- Air quality improvement strategies

Learn more about how the project is addressing air quality in our project fact sheet.

What is an Environmental Assessment? What is an Environmental Impact Statement and how is it different?

**Environmental Assessment.** An Environmental Assessment is a study. The Environmental Assessment looks at impacts a project can have on the environment. There are three main parts.
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- The purpose and need of the project.
- An understanding of the current project area with or without the project. An understanding of the future project area with or without the project.
- A review of the short- and long-term environmental impacts.

The Environmental Assessment identifies ways to reduce adverse effects to people and the environment. The Federal Highway Administration reviews the Environmental Assessment. There are two outcomes from the review.

1. The Federal Highway Administration issues a Finding of No Significant Impact if there are no significant impacts. This ends the environmental step in the project.
2. An Environmental Impact Statement is needed if there are significant impacts.

**Environmental Impact Statement.** An Environmental Impact Statement is an additional study. The Environmental Impact Statement is needed if significant impacts could come from the project to people or the environment. The Federal Highway Administration determines this outcome. The Environmental Impact Statement studies more items than the Environmental Assessment.

- Evaluates the Environmental Assessment.
- Discusses alternatives to the project.
- Reviews cumulative impacts from the project.
- Reviews future development in the project area.

The Environmental Impact Statement requires specific community outreach in the project area and requires responses to community feedback. This includes input from residents, businesses, property owners, agencies, stakeholders, and community groups. This process also requires a public hearing.

Learn more about the environmental process and environmental analysis for the project in these fact sheets.

**What environmental review did the project do?**

The I-5 Rose Quarter Improvement Project did more than required to assess environmental impacts. The project first completed the Environmental Assessment (EA) then completed additional steps:

- Research was done on the environmental effects to see if more study was needed.
- We went beyond environmental requirements in our analysis of greenhouse gas emissions.
- Partners concerns were responded to and addressed.
- Goals set for building the project were assessed.
- Held a public hearing.
- Stakeholders were part of the process. Benefits and impacts from the project were shared with the public.
These additional steps included most of the requirements of the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). The project team calls this the Environmental Assessment Plus (EA+) process.

Project partners asked the Oregon Transportation Commission to complete an Environmental Impact Statement or establish another way to address community concerns. An EIS would not have:

- Addressed all of these concerns.
- Changed the traffic analysis.
- Ensured benefits to low income populations.

An Environmental Impact Statement would have delayed the project and its benefits to the community. To address concerns, the project team changed the process. The change added project partners at each level of the process. Additional changes included:

- Conducting two independent review processes.
- Establishing committees focused on restorative justice.
- Establishing a committee focused on disadvantaged business and workforce opportunities.
- Making design changes from partner and community input.

The Environmental Assessment Plus process continues to provide additional project benefits beyond an Environmental Impact Statement. Continuous partner and community input has led to design changes (learn more about those here). These changes directly respond to concerns in line with the project values.

Extensive outreach with the community, partners and committees will continue through the design and construction phases. There will be continued partnership to address issues, challenges and opportunities moving forward.

**Project Design and Elements**

**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.

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 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.

How wide is the I-5 Rose Quarter right-of-way and how is it used?

The typical I-5 Rose Quarter cross section is 126 feet wide. The cross section includes an inside and outside shoulder, two through lanes, and one auxiliary lane for the highway in each direction. All shoulders and lanes are 12 feet wide. The anticipated cross section would also provide the opportunity for buses to drive on the shoulders to avoid traffic and space needed for fire, life, and safety requirements and provisions under the highway covers.

The project evaluated in the Environmental Assessment includes the existing two travel lanes and new auxiliary lanes and shoulders between I-84 and I-405. This represents the typical cross section: approximately 126 feet. The shoulders are not proposed for use as new or future travel lanes for vehicle travel.

This cross section is located within the I-5 right-of-way. The right-of-way width is highly variable along the length of the highway, because it accommodates connections to the street grid (including existing on- and off-ramps) around the highway, connections to existing property lines across different topographies (including slopes), transitions for the shoulders and the medians, and support columns for highway cover and bridge structures. The right-of-way has a variety of uses including landscaping, sound walls, and highway cross sections. In line with the project value of public health, we are committed to working with the community to use a portion of the right-of-way for green space.
What is the Southbound Realignment?

Last year, the project design team identified technical challenges with reconstructing the Eliot Wall, the proposed sound wall near Harriet Tubman Middle School. In late January, following an initial analysis by the project Construction Manager/General Contractor – which joined the team in late 2020 – we were able to better understand those challenges from both a design and constructability perspective, and directed the team to do further evaluation of an alternative alignment.

The alternative would shift the northern portion of the project’s highway alignment to the west and minimizes those technical and construction concerns. This option would not move I-5 any closer to the school site but could have impacts to properties on the west side of the highway.

We are at the very early stages of that evaluation and are working on ways to address technical and construction challenges. We are actively communicating with the owners of properties on both sides of the highway to understand the impacts the new design option may have.

The team anticipates sharing concepts with all affected property owners and our advisory committees in late June and gathering broader public feedback later this summer. Stay tuned to hear more about this work soon!

Learn more about the Southbound Realignment Design option here.

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 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.

Construction

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 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.
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. 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 has been on board and under contract as of since 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 are the anticipated construction impacts for the project?

ODOT and project partners worked together to develop the current design concept for the project with to avoid and minimize impacts to the natural and human environment. Potential short-term impacts during construction would be temporary and limited to areas within the existing I-5 corridor and surface streets in the immediate vicinity of construction activity. These would end once construction is complete. These impacts include:

**Transportation:** ODOT will develop a comprehensive transportation management plan to minimize construction impacts on I-5 operations and traffic on local streets. In addition to construction areas and schedule, the plan will document:

- Location and timing of detours or alternate routes for all modes of travel needed during planned road and lane closures.
- Transportation management and operation strategies to reduce traffic congestion.
- Temporary local street closures or turn restrictions as needed to limit traffic on local streets in residential neighborhoods.
- Highway lane closures are likely on I-5 during removal and construction of the overcrossing structures and retaining walls, including potential late night and weekend lane closures.

**Air Quality:** Temporary air quality impacts during construction could include the release of dust generated by digging, surface grading, hauling, and various other construction activities, as well as emissions from the use of construction equipment.
Historic Property: Nine historic properties could be affected by noise and vibration, increased truck traffic, traffic congestion, increased dust, and temporary changes to the historic setting and accessibility due to the presence of construction equipment, staging areas, and materials storage areas.

Hazardous Materials: During construction, there could be the potential for spills or releases of oil and fuel from mechanical equipment.

Noise Levels: Construction activities would result in a temporary increase in noise levels limited to areas within the existing I-5 corridor. Most of these areas already experience higher levels of noise due to the sounds made by highway traffic.

Access: Construction would result in temporary access impacts to people who walk, bike, roll, and use transit, as well as event access for the Moda Center and Oregon Convention Center.

- Construction-related impacts to transit would include temporary bus stop closures or relocations, bus route detours, and changes to streetcar operations.
- ODOT will work closely with businesses in the Project area to implement strategies to limit disruption to business access. ODOT will use temporary signage as needed and attempt to maintain access to businesses during construction.
- Event access will be maintained during construction and may require more active traffic management before and after events. ODOT will coordinate closely with the Moda Center and Oregon Convention Center to coordinate major traffic disruptions to avoid major events where possible.

Utilities: Existing above- and below-ground utilities could be impacted during construction. Effects could range from brief temporary service interruptions to major relocations of electric transmission and distribution lines, water supply lines, and large capacity sewer lines.

Undiscovered Archaeological Resources: Previously undiscovered archaeological resources could be impacted from the use of heavy equipment during digging, grading, or compacting of soils during construction. Potential impacts to archaeological resources have been addressed through an Inadvertent Discovery Plan and Programmatic Agreement between the Federal Highway Administration, Oregon State Historic Preservation Office, and ODOT. The plan identifies the steps that must be followed to protect archaeological resources in the event that they are discovered during construction activity.

Environmental justice populations: The project could result in temporary impacts to environmental justice populations from the relocation of bus routes, adjustments to streetcar service, temporary closures of key walking and bicycling routes, and minor air impacts and moderate to substantial noise impacts from construction equipment. We are committed to minimizing impacts to these communities and have taken measures to understand how to do this through the Environmental Peer Review and through advisement from the Historic Albina Advisory Board. We are also working with the Historic Albina Advisory Board to explore ways to minimize these impacts.
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.