

I-5 Rose Quarter Improvement Project: Frequently Asked Questions

What are the proposed project improvements?

The I-5 Rose Quarter Improvement Project will make travel more convenient, reliable and safe for people driving on I-5, or biking, walking or taking public transit in the Rose Quarter area. The project will add:

- Covers over the highway where city streets cross over I-5 to enhance connections for people walking, biking, taking public transit and driving.
- A new overcrossing for all modes connecting N Hancock St to N Dixon St at the Portland Public Schools headquarters to enhance connections and access in the North and Northeast neighborhoods. This could also open up land for redevelopment near the school district property.
- A new bicycle- and pedestrian-only bridge from NE Clackamas St to N Ramsay Way to improve connections between the Moda Center/Veterans Memorial Coliseum area and the Lloyd District and Oregon Convention Center.
- Upgrades to bicycle and pedestrian facilities on the local street network in and around the Broadway/Weidler interchange to provide a safer travel experience.
- One new ramp-to-ramp lane (also called an auxiliary lane) in each direction on I-5 between I-84 and I-405 to reduce weaving and merging and improve safety.
- Shoulders in each direction on I-5 between I-84 and I-405 for stalled vehicles to move out of traffic and for emergency vehicles to travel to people quickly and safely.
- Relocating the on-ramp to I-5 southbound from NE Wheeler Ave to NE Weidler St to reduce crashes caused by short merging and weaving distances.

Minimal private property will be impacted by the project improvements.

Why is the I-5 Rose Quarter Improvement Project needed?

With high traffic volumes, closely spaced interchanges, and no shoulders, I-5 at the Rose Quarter has the highest crash rate in Oregon. In the Rose Quarter, I-5 southbound is in the top 5 percent of safety priority sites in the state and I-5 northbound is in the top 10 percent of safety priority sites in the state. Crashes on I-5 are primarily rear end and sideswipe collisions, including serious injury crashes.

This stretch of I-5 also frustrates freight haulers and commuters with long and unreliable travel times.

The local streets connected to the I-5 Broadway/Weidler interchange also are often clogged as vehicles line up to enter I-5, impacting those on bikes, transit, and on foot. This causes conflict between motorists and people walking, biking, and using transit. Congestion on I-5 and the adjacent streets also impedes access for people driving, walking, biking, and taking transit through the City's North and Northeast neighborhoods.

What are the primary project benefits?

The project improvements are expected to have the following benefits:

- Up to 50 percent reduction in crashes on I-5
- Fewer crashes means more reliable travel through the corridor, saving millions of hours of travel time each year
- A new local street grid across I-5 that opens up new routes for people to walk, bike, drive, and use public transit. A potential bicycle- and pedestrian-only bridge over I-5 would create an essential link for the proposed Green Loop, a 6-mile signature linear park and active transportation path that would connect both sides of the Willamette River.
- Improved seismic resiliency for area residents and businesses by rebuilding bridges over I-5.

What bicycle and pedestrian improvements does the project provide?

The project will upgrade and add new bicycle and pedestrian facilities on local streets in the vicinity of the Broadway-Weidler interchange to provide a safer travel experience and better connections for people walking and bicycling within the Central City area. The project will maintain and enhance the existing east-west bicycle routes on Broadway and Weidler and north-south routes on Williams and Vancouver.

The proposed bicycle and pedestrian features include:

- Clackamas Bicycle/Pedestrian bridge to provide a new east-west crossing of I-5 to connect the Lloyd District with the Rose Quarter and offering an essential link for the future Green Loop
- Upgrades to bicycle and pedestrian facilities on new Broadway-Weidler-Williams and Vancouver-Hancock highway covers, which could include replacing substandard or missing on-street bike lanes with substantially better facilities.
- New Hancock/Dixon bridge and highway cover to provide an alternative crossing to the north of Broadway/Weidler interchange. It allows people walking and biking to travel directly between the inner N/NE neighborhoods and the Broadway Bridge and also to avoid walking or biking through the congested I-5 interchange, where vehicle traffic entering the freeway backs up onto NE Broadway and NE Weidler Streets
- New median bicycle and pedestrian path on N Williams Ave, between N Broadway St and N Weidler St to separate people walking and biking from automobile traffic
- New well-lit sidewalks, ADA accessible ramps, high visibility crosswalks on the streets connected to the Broadway/Weidler interchange

ODOT and the City of Portland guidelines would be to provide widened sidewalks and bike lanes, which could include buffered or protected bike lanes. The project's environmental study will inform the final bicycle and pedestrian design. ODOT will publish the environmental findings in Summer 2018 and the public will have an opportunity to comment prior to the design phase, which is anticipated to commence in 2019.

What is a highway cover and what benefits do they provide?

A highway cover is a concrete or steel platform that spans over the highway. In this case, I-5 is below and the highway covers would go over the top, connecting local streets and neighborhoods. The covers create more surface area for, new and modern bicycle and pedestrian facilities, and public spaces. The new connections and public space will serve and support existing and future

development in the adjacent neighborhoods. The highway covers also 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 residents and first responders in the event of a major earthquake.

How will the project improve connectivity?

Project improvements will make local streets better for people walking and biking, 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, bicycle and pedestrian facilities, and public spaces. Specifically, the Clackamas Bicycle and Pedestrian Crossing will provide a new connection for people walking and biking between the Lloyd and Rose Quarter and also will offer the Green Loop connection over I-5. The new Hancock-Dixon Crossing also will provide a new connection across I-5 and people driving, walking, and biking 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 benefits do ramp-to-ramp lanes (auxiliary lanes) and shoulders on I-5 provide?

This project will add a ramp-to-ramp lane (auxiliary lane) and shoulder to I-5 between I-84 and the Fremont Bridge/I-405 in both northbound and southbound directions, creating direct connections that will reduce weaving and merging to improve safety and operations without adding any additional through lanes to the freeway.

By having continuous ramp-to-ramp lanes in both directions, motorists can transition from one exit to the next without merging into through traffic, which is what often causes crashes and slows down traffic. Also, the added shoulders would allow stalled vehicles to move out of through traffic and enable emergency vehicles to get to those in need more effectively, out of the flow of traffic. The project's ramp-to-ramp lanes minimize private property impacts.

Can the auxiliary lanes and shoulders be added without removing the existing local streets?

To complete the highway improvements on I-5, the structures crossing over the highway have to be removed, including the roads and the columns that support them. To replace the crossings, the project will add covers over I-5 to make the area more connected, walkable and bike friendly. The highway, local street, and bicycle and pedestrian improvements are inseparable – one will not occur without the other.

What are the impacts to private property?

Most of the project is within existing ODOT right-of-way and as a result, minimal private property will be impacted by the project.

What are the effects if the I-5 Rose Quarter Improvement Project is not built?

If the I-5 Rose Quarter Improvement Project is not built:

- No safety improvements to I-5 are made to reduce the highest crash rate in the state
- No improvements to travel reliability for motorists and freight
- No highway covers are built to provide improved connections and community spaces

- No pedestrian, bicycle, or local street improvements at the Broadway/Weidler interchange
- No new bicycle or pedestrian crossings are added over I-5 are made to improve safety for people who walk, bike, and drive

Traffic is expected to worsen in the Rose Quarter area if the project is not completed. The use of this section of I-5 will continue to rise as Portland's population grows; as this occurs, travel time is expected to continue to increase and high crash rates would likely continue to rise.

The project's environmental study will compare the positive and negative impacts of both building and not building the improvements. ODOT will publish the findings in Summer 2018 and the public will have an opportunity to comment.

How are we involving the public in this project?

Public involvement and community input are essential for the success of this project. While studying the environmental benefits and impacts of the project, the project team will provide many opportunities for the public to get involved and share input including:

- Project Open Houses
- Community Bike Rides and Walks
- Community and Business Forums
- Project Website and Online Activities
- Community Liaisons Meetings
- Presentations at Neighborhood Events/Meetings
- Small Group Discussions

Scheduled upcoming events include:

- Community Liaisons Meeting – Tuesday, September 26, 2017 | 5:30 p.m. – 7:30 p.m.
- Community and Neighborhood Forum – Thursday, September 28, 2017 | 6:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.
- Community Walk and Bike Ride – Saturday, October 7, 2017 | 10:00 a.m.

The project's environmental study, which will examine the project's short- and long-term benefits and impacts, also will be published for public review in Summer 2018.

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

Find ways to stay involved throughout the environmental review process by visiting the project website at www.i5RoseQuarter.org, attending an event or contacting the project team directly at info@I5RoseQuarter.org or 503.423.3760.

How did ODOT and the City of Portland arrive at these improvements?

I-5 between I-84 and I-405 has the highest crash rate and some of the highest traffic volumes in the state and is one of the nation's top freight bottlenecks. As far back as 1987, ODOT and the City of Portland have been exploring how to maximize improvements to I-5 and the Rose Quarter while minimizing costs, right of way needs and impacts to the surrounding community.

From 2010 to 2012, the City of Portland and ODOT jointly worked on the [N/NE Quadrant Plan](#) and the [I-5 Broadway/Weidler Facility Plan](#) to address transportation improvements in sync with the City's land use goals and need for better connectivity in the area.

During the two-year community engagement process, stakeholders and staff contemplated over 70 options for improving transportation on I-5 and local streets around the Broadway/Weidler interchange. The public design process included a 30-member Stakeholder Advisory Committee (SAC), numerous community engagement events, study area tours and many briefings with potentially affected stakeholders and property owners to shape the preferred improvements. More than 2,800 people came to the public events, including the 19 SAC meeting, 14 subcommittee meetings, 4 open houses, 2 charrettes, and 3 community walks. The SAC was integral to the process and defining one recommended design concept, providing input from neighborhood, business, bicycle, pedestrian, transit, freight, rail, event facility and property owner interests.

The I-5 Broadway/Weidler Facility Plan and recommended design concept was adopted by the Oregon Transportation Commission and Portland City Council in 2012 and also became part of Metro's [2014 Regional Transportation Plan](#). The I-5 Rose Quarter Improvement Project moves this approved design concept into the next phase of project development.