

I-5 Rose Quarter Improvement Project: Frequently Asked Questions

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

If you've traveled through the Rose Quarter area during rush hour, you understand the challenges maneuvering through the busy Broadway and Weidler intersections or getting on and off I-5. It can be frustrating and unpredictable. 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 proposed project improvements?

The I-5 Rose Quarter Improvement Project builds new and improved travel options and community connections for everyone: people who walk, bike, drive or have disabilities, use local streets, take transit or use the highway. . The project will add:

- Covers over the highway where city streets cross over I-5 to create more usable space for wider sidewalks, protected bike paths and community features such as public art, food carts, a dog park or others.
- A new overcrossing for all modes connecting N Hancock St to N Dixon St over I-5. This new crossing provides another option for people to cross I-5 while avoiding the busy Broadway and Weidler intersections at Vancouver and Williams, or to access current or future destinations in Lower Albina.
- A new bicycle- and pedestrian-only bridge from NE Clackamas St to N Ramsay Way to improve bike and pedestrian access between the river, the Rose Quarter entertainment district and Lloyd businesses while providing a dedicated path for those who walk and bike.
- Wider sidewalks, improved crosswalks and separated bike lanes on the local street network to provide a safer, more comfortable 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 for more reliable travel with less potential for crashes.
- Shoulders in each direction on I-5 between I-84 and I-405 to create space for disabled vehicles to move out of through traffic, allow emergency vehicles to respond more quickly, and keep people moving.
- Relocating the I-5 southbound on-ramp from NE Wheeler Ave to NE Weidler St to reduce interactions between vehicles and people who walk and bike as vehicles enter I-5.

When will construction start?

Construction is anticipated to start around 2023 and is expected to last about 4-5 years.

How is this project being funded?

Partial funding was provided through House Bill 2017. ODOT will continue to work with its partners to seek additional funding for these improvements. The project team will provide updated cost information as it becomes available.

What are the primary project benefits?

The project improvements are expected to have the following benefits:

- Safer, more comfortable travel options for people who walk, bike or have disabilities.
- Up to 50 percent reduction in crashes on I-5.
- A new local street grid across I-5 that creates more direct connections between the east and west sides of the highway.
- Improved seismic resiliency for area residents and businesses by rebuilding bridges over I-5.
- More reliable travel times through the corridor, saving millions of hours of travel time each year.

What bicycle and pedestrian improvements does the project provide?

The project creates more space and new connections for people walking and biking, so everyone can travel more safely and conveniently through the Rose Quarter area. It will also maintain and enhance the existing east-west bicycle routes on Broadway and Weidler and north-south routes on Williams and Vancouver.

Proposed bicycle and pedestrian features include:

- New Clackamas Bicycle and Pedestrian bridge to provide a dedicated path over I-5 for people who walk and bike, connecting 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 wider sidewalks, improved crosswalks and separated bike lanes.
- New Hancock/Dixon Connection to provide a new and improved east-west connection to the Lower Albina neighborhood. This new crossing will include space for separated bicycle and pedestrian paths, creating a safe and more connected travel option for everyone.
- 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, and high visibility crosswalks on the streets in the Rose Quarter Area.

ODOT and the City of Portland guidelines will 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 early 2019 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. Completing the improvements on I-5 requires removing and rebuilding the bridges crossing over the highway. The project will build new highway covers to provide space for wide sidewalks, separated bike lanes and roads. Covers also provide opportunity for community and placemaking activities. Through community input and involvement, options such as food carts, public art, a skate park, a dog park or park chess, will be explored.

The highway covers will be built to current seismic standards, making the structures more resilient than the existing bridges in the event of an earthquake. This will provide critical transportation access for 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 District 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?

With a new ramp-to-ramp lane in each direction on I-5 from I-84 to I-405, drivers will experience a more reliable trip with less potential for crashes. A ramp-to-ramp lane means that drivers have more space to merge and do not have to merge with through traffic if they are going to the next exit. Drivers can stay in the right lane and exit at the next opportunity. Adding full shoulders in this same area will create space for disabled vehicles to move out of through traffic, allow emergency vehicles to respond more quickly, and keep people moving.

Adding ramp-to-ramp lanes and shoulders is expected to reduce crashes up to 50 percent on I-5, save over 2.5 million hours of travel time each year, and result in \$732 million in economic benefits.

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 must 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 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 early 2019, followed by a public comment period.

How are we involving the public in this project?

Public involvement and community input are essential for the success of this project. Throughout the environmental study phase, the project team has already been reaching out to the public in a variety of ways, resulting in a robust amount of engagement:

- 1,000+ comments received
- 41 committee and community group presentations
- 9 public events and 280+ attendees
- 800+ email sign-ups
- 370+ surveys completed
- 50 total outreach events and activities

While studying the environmental benefits and impacts of the project, the project team has provided 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

The project's environmental study, which examines the project's short- and long-term benefits and impacts, will be published for public review in early 2019.

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

Winter 2019

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?

ODOT and the City of Portland are ongoing partners on the I-5 Rose Quarter Improvement Project, sustaining a joint effort that began in 2010 and continues today. This project was created by the local community, City of Portland and ODOT working together and planning for changes coming in the future of inner north and northeast Portland. After looking at more than 70 options, the community, state and local agencies recommended moving forward with the I-5 Rose Quarter Improvement Project that addresses community connections and traffic issues in the area.

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.

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.