

Facts about the Multnomah County Willamette River Bridges Capital Improvement Plan



Our landscape is defined by rivers and the bridges that span them. Whether we think about it or not, we all depend on safe, convenient river crossings for our daily lives and livelihood. Multnomah County is responsible for six of the Willamette River bridges. In addition to being community landmarks, they are vital to the region's economy as well as our quality of life. The County is in the midst of a major update to its 20-year Bridges Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) to identify and prioritize capital projects required to sustain these important river crossings for all of us.

In recent years, the County has been focused on replacing two of the neediest bridges. The Sauvie Island Bridge to the north of Portland was rebuilt in 2008. The Sellwood Bridge to the south is being replaced with a new span that will open in the fall of 2015. As new structures, their long-term maintenance needs will be less than those of the oldest bridges.

The centerpiece of the CIP is the collection of four downtown Portland bridges: Hawthorne, Broadway, Burnside and Morrison. All four are listed on the National Historic Registry, and the first two are more than a century old. Additionally, they are all mechanically-complex bridges that open for river traffic. These iconic engineering marvels proudly grace Portland's skyline, but they are also costly to maintain and repair by current standards. They are also highly susceptible to failing in the event of a major earthquake.

With the 2014 – 2034 Willamette River Bridges CIP, the County is taking a thorough and comprehensive look at the needs of this critical transportation infrastructure. With limited available funding for major bridge upgrades or replacements, there are questions to be answered about which improvements to plan for and prioritize. The CIP will address those questions.



Objectives of the CIP

- Develop a comprehensive understanding of the current condition of the County's six Willamette River bridges
- Provide a rational basis for identifying and prioritizing capital projects
- Establish criteria for determining priorities and selecting projects
- Provide opportunities for stakeholder/public input, including consultation with key partner agencies
- Conduct a seismic sufficiency evaluation
- Identify needs, projects and costs to maintain the bridges to identified performance standards
- Assess life cycle and maintenance needs for key mechanical, electrical and structural systems and paint
- Consider and compare programmatic rehabilitation costs versus replacement costs for the four oldest bridges

The Capital Improvement planning process embodies values that are important to Multnomah County, including safety, social justice, sustainability, emergency preparedness, community health and public input. The County is considering a number of performance attributes that are important to bridge functionality and community livability (see table below). These will be used to help evaluate a range of options that will then be prioritized in order to maintain and improve the bridges over the next two decades.

Performance Attribute	Definition
Movable Operations	The drawbridges' ability to maintain movable operations, including river and roadway traffic
Regional Alignment	How well the projects align with adjacent Partner Agency CIP projects and regional plans, including emergency preparedness plans
Structural Integrity	The structural condition of the bridges (using national bridge rating standards), including paint system ability to preserve the structural condition of the bridge
Emergency Preparedness	The bridges' ability to resist seismic, flood and other emergency events
Maintenance	Overall durability, longevity, and maintainability of structural and roadway surfaces and ease of maintenance; accessibility and safety considerations for maintenance personnel
User Safety	Multi-modal (including river traffic) safety on the facilities and approaches
Livable Community	How the improvement promotes a multi-modal community including the use of bicycles, transit, pedestrians (ADA compatibility) to encourage a more livable and healthy community
Social Justice	How the projects serve traditionally underserved (minority, low-income, limited English proficiency, youth, elderly, disabled) communities
Sustainability	Long-term economic and environmental well-being of the community including preservation of the historic and iconic nature of the bridges
Traffic Operations	Safe, efficient operations of motor vehicles , freight mobility, and congestion reductions

Your Opinion Matters!

Public input is an important part of the CIP planning process. The County is meeting with stakeholders and gathering input online to inform CIP development. Public meetings will be held in March and again later this year. The planning process will continue throughout 2014, with a draft CIP document available for public review this fall. The final step will be Multnomah County Board of County Commissioners' adoption of the CIP.

For more information, visit the project website at www.multco.us/bridgeplan or contact Mike Pullen, Multnomah County Communications, at (503) 209-4111 or bridgeplan@multco.us.

