



## OFFICES OF THE GOVERNORS

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**NEWS RELEASE**  
**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
**July 30, 2010**

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**Governors Receive Independent Report on Columbia River Crossing Project**

*Panel concludes new bridge is necessary and provides roadmap for project to move forward; governors direct state agencies to develop implementation plan*

*Salem/Olympia* – Today Governors Ted Kulongoski and Chris Gregoire received the final report from the Independent Review Panel (IRP) that they appointed in [April](#) to assess the work of the Columbia River Crossing (CRC) project and provide recommendations for improvements and refinements as the work continues.

In a letter to the governors, the panel affirms that the CRC must move forward and a new bridge should be constructed at the earliest possible date. The panel also commends the work to date on the preliminary environmental and engineering issues and outlines a series of recommendations to serve as a roadmap to move from design to completion of the project.

“This report delivered what we needed – a status report on this critical transportation project from an independent panel of national experts, as well as guidance on how best to advance the project in a timely, fiscally and environmentally responsible manner,” said Governor Ted Kulongoski. “This report confirms that we need a new bridge – that’s not in question. And it offers constructive feedback on how best to move forward so that we can deliver a bridge that meets the needs of our region’s future – both in terms of the economy and livability.”

“Replacing the two aging Interstate 5 bridges that connect our two states will create jobs and ease congestion for thousands of daily commuters and improve the movement of freight and goods along this key corridor on the West Coast,” said Governor Gregoire. “We are committed to building a bridge that reflects our northwest values and environmental conscience by accommodating not only cars and freight, but also high capacity transit, bicycles and

pedestrians. This project will serve as a model for how the rest of the nation tackles major multi-modal transportation investments in the future.”

The panel included experts with national and international experience in project financing and delivery, environmental law and land use, risk management, transit project planning, context sensitive design, and bridge design and construction. The panel was charged to: Assess the implementation plan for the CRC project; Review the financial plan for the project; and Review and evaluate post-construction performance measures.

The panel’s review was far-reaching, with presentations on all facets of the project. Some of the topics examined included urban design, traffic modeling, community outreach, environmental permitting, alternatives considered, tribal coordination and financing.

As part of its review, the panel convened six public meetings in both states to obtain project information and to receive testimony from the Departments of Transportation, associated stakeholders and the general public. The panel also received public comments from 200 individuals and held consultations with many federal agencies including the Federal Transit Administration, Federal Highway Administration and the National Park Service.

Upon receiving the report and recommendations, the governors today also directed the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) and the Washington Department of Transportation (WASHDOT) to develop a plan to address the recommendations outlined by the panel and report back with an estimated timeline and execution plan for the completion of each action item.

The governors called for the prioritization of several key recommendations that demand immediate attention, including full and final resolution of the issues affecting Hayden Island by the City of Portland and additional technical analysis surrounding the currently agreed upon bridge type. Once those issues are finalized, a more refined cost estimate can be established.

This week local Hayden Island community representatives and elected leader’s staff reached a consensus on the Hayden Island interchange design. This recommendation, if accepted later this month, makes establishing more finalized cost estimates and environmental assessments possible.

“I’m pleased that the Hayden Island issues are being addressed through the local process so that we can turn our attention to the pressing issue of cost,” said Governor Kulongoski. “As our two states work to implement these next steps, we must create greater certainty around the cost to ensure that we not only have a workable design but that this bridge is affordable. This bridge is critical to economic vitality of the Pacific Northwest, but we also have to be realistic and exercise fiscal restraint by building this with the least cost to taxpayers.”

The governors asked for ODOT and WASHDOT to prepare updated cost estimates and continuation of the Cost Estimate Validation Process (CEVP) by the end of the year when the issues surrounding the Hayden Island Interchange and bridge type are resolved. They want the parties to do everything that they can to ensure that costs do not exceed the \$3.6 billion estimated in the revised Locally Preferred Alternative from December 2009.

“The report has given us a very helpful roadmap to move forward on the project,” said Governor Gregoire. “I have confidence that the dedicated and professional staff at the two state transportation departments will leverage the momentum we now have to get the job done.”

The governors asked for a status report on the plan to implement the report recommendations within the next 30 days.

For the full report, click [here](#).