

Property Purchases and Easements

Planned highway and transit improvements by the Columbia River Crossing (CRC) project will require the purchase of some property and easements. The project team is working to stay within the existing right of way, but some land acquisition will be unavoidable.

How will CRC decide which properties need to be acquired?

Project staff are in the process of evaluating property needs for the planned bridge, transit and highway improvements. As engineering plans are further developed, more information will be available about property acquisition needs.

In addition to purchasing property, CRC may seek short or long term use of land without acquiring it. These arrangements may be in the form of an easement (right to use) or a lease.

Columbia River Crossing A long-term, comprehensive solution

CRC is a long-term, comprehensive project to improve safety, reduce congestion and enhance mobility on I-5 between SR 500 in Vancouver and Columbia Boulevard in Portland. The project will replace the I-5 bridge, extend light rail to Vancouver, improve closely-spaced interchanges and enhance the pedestrian and bicycle path between the two cities.

Project Benefits

- Improved safety
- No bridge lifts
- Earthquake protection
- Reduced congestion on I-5 and adjacent neighborhoods
- A more reliable trip for freight, autos and transit
- New and sustained jobs with improved access to ports and highways
- Reduced emissions and improved air quality

Easements are sought when access to an area through public streets is not possible. Leases are typically used when property is needed for a short term use. Examples may be for construction equipment storage or utility relocation.

What is the process for purchasing property?

The process to purchase property is governed by state and federal laws, including the Federal Uniform Relocation Act.

The process typically involves several steps:

- Project staff will meet with potentially impacted property owners. Staff have initiated these conversations for CRC and will contact additional property owners as project designs are finalized.
- A real estate expert from the project team will prepare an appraisal, with input from the property owner, to determine the fair market value of the property.
- The appraisal is reviewed by a second appraiser from the project team.
- An offer is made to purchase the property.
- The owner is given time to consider the offer and discuss any concerns with the project team.
- The project team purchases the property and provides relocation assistance to owners and tenants according to state and federal law.

When will property purchases occur?

Properties will not be purchased until funding becomes available and key environmental milestones have been reached. These milestones include the Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and Record of Decision (ROD). The Final EIS will include additional analysis of the environmental and community effects of the project and a finance plan.

Completing the Final EIS allows the project to request a ROD from the federal government. This document allows property acquisition and construction to begin. The ROD is expected in 2011. The earliest property acquisition could begin is also in 2011.

Schedule and Next Steps

In July 2008, local project partners reached consensus that a replacement bridge and light rail extension would best meet project goals and community needs.

Since then, work has progressed to advance project design and move the project closer to construction.

Analysis of the project's environmental and community effects will be included in a Final Environmental Impact Statement.



What if a property owner doesn't want to sell, or the owner and state can't agree on a purchase price?

If someone does not want to sell their property, the state will work closely with them in a cooperative manner to negotiate mutually agreeable terms. In extreme cases, the state may exercise eminent domain, although this rarely occurs.

The compensation paid for properties is the result of an independent appraisal process that ensures the owner receives, and the taxpayer pays, no more and no less than the fair market value of a property.

Types of property purchases:

Full purchase – The state acquires an entire property.

Partial acquisition – In some cases, the state only needs a portion of a property to meet the project needs and will make an offer to purchase part of the property.

Easement – An easement is the limited right to use someone else's land. In the case of CRC, the state may request a temporary or permanent easement to gain access to the construction site, relocate utilities, or anchor highway structures underground.

Lease – It is possible that the project team will only need temporary access to a site. In that case, the state may enter into a lease until the land is no longer needed.

Where can I get more information?

E-mail: feedback@columbiarivercrossing.org

Mail: 700 Washington Street, Suite 300
Vancouver, WA 98660

Phone: 360-737-2726 or 503-256-2726

How can I get involved?

- Visit the website at www.ColumbiaRiverCrossing.org to sign up for updates and view the project calendar
- Attend an advisory group meeting
- Invite CRC staff to your group to discuss the project
- Contact the project office to talk with a staff member

OTHER RESOURCES:

[Washington State Department of Transportation](http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/realestate) | www.wsdot.wa.gov/realestate

[Oregon Department of Transportation](http://www.oregon.gov/odot/hwy/row) | www.oregon.gov/odot/hwy/row

[TriMet](http://www.trimet.org/pdfs/publications/acquisition-relocation.pdf) | www.trimet.org/pdfs/publications/acquisition-relocation.pdf

[Federal Transit Administration](http://www.fta.dot.gov/planning/planning_environment_5937.html) | www.fta.dot.gov/planning/planning_environment_5937.html

[Federal Highway Administration](http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/realestate) | www.fhwa.dot.gov/realestate



AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT (ADA) INFORMATION Materials can be provided in alternative formats: large print, Braille, cassette tape, or on computer disk for people with disabilities by calling the Columbia River Crossing (CRC) project office at (866) 396-2726. Persons who are deaf or hard of hearing may contact the CRC project through the Telecommunications Relay Service at 7-1-1.

TITLE VI NOTICE TO PUBLIC WSDOT and ODOT ensure full compliance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 by prohibiting discrimination against any person on the basis of race, color, national origin or sex in the provision of benefits and services resulting from its federally assisted programs and activities. For questions regarding WSDOT's Title VI Program, you may contact the Department's Title VI Coordinator at (360) 705-7098. For questions regarding ODOT's Title VI Program, you may contact the Department's Civil Rights Office at (503) 986-4350.

UPDATED: May 12, 2011

www.ColumbiaRiverCrossing.org