
Transportation Committee

HB 2084

Brief Description: Requiring the joint transportation committee to conduct a study of a third bridge over the Columbia river between southwest Washington and Oregon.

Sponsors: Representatives Vick, Hoff, Sutherland and Kraft.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Requires the Joint Transportation Committee to conduct a study of the options and strategies to construct a third bridge over the Columbia River between southwest Washington and Oregon.

Hearing Date: 1/31/22

Staff: Christine Thomas (786-7142).

Background:

Interstate 5 Bridge. The Interstate 5 (I-5) Bridge crosses the Columbia River and connects Vancouver, Washington, and Portland, Oregon, with two identical bridge structures. One bridge structure carries traffic northbound to Vancouver, and the other bridge structure carries traffic southbound to Portland. The northbound bridge was built in 1917, and the southbound bridge was built in 1958.

Replacement Bridge Planning Prior to 2014. The Columbia River Crossing (CRC) Project, as described in the record of decision, would have replaced the I-5 bridges, extended light rail to Vancouver, improved closely spaced interchanges, and enhanced the pedestrian and bicycle paths. The estimated project costs ranged from \$3.1 billion to \$3.5 billion. Between 2005 and 2013, \$196.6 million was spent on the project, with the Washington State Department of Transportation spending \$94.1 million and the Oregon Department of Transportation spending

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\$102.5 million. The project was discontinued officially in the spring of 2014.

Replacement Bridge Planning Efforts since 2017. In the 2017 Legislative Session, a Joint Oregon-Washington Legislative Action Committee (committee) was established regarding the planning and construction of a new I-5 bridge to replace the I-5 Bridge. The committee is tasked with several duties including: working with both states' departments of transportation, transportation commissions, and stakeholders to begin a process toward project development; reviewing and confirming lead roles related to permitting, construction, operation, and maintenance of a future I-5 bridge project; and establishing a process to seek public comment on the I-5 bridge project development plan. The committee, composed of eight members of the Washington Legislature and eight members of the Oregon Legislature, is also tasked with other duties as well as making recommendations to both states regarding financing, timing of improvements, and operations of the bridges. The committee met several times in the spring and fall of 2021 to continue planning efforts.

The Joint Transportation Committee. The Joint Transportation Committee (JTC) is a bicameral legislative committee established in law to review and research transportation programs and issues in order to educate and promote the dissemination of transportation research to state and local government policymakers, including legislators and associated staff. The JTC is governed by an executive committee consisting of the chairs and ranking members of the House of Representatives and Senate Transportation committees. The chairs of the House of Representatives and Senate Transportation committees serve as cochairs of the JTC.

Summary of Bill:

The JTC is directed to conduct a study of the options and strategies to construct a third bridge over the Columbia River between southwest Washington and Oregon. The study must include anticipated general purpose and freight traffic demand relieved by a third bridge, a cost-benefit analysis of constructing a third bridge, potential locations for a third bridge, and preliminary design options. The final report is due to the transportation committees of the Legislature by June 30, 2023.

Appropriation: \$300,000 of the Motor Vehicle Account-State is appropriated to the JTC for the study.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.