

# Washington, Oregon governors sign agreement to replace I-5 Bridge

Inslee: 'We do not have an option. This bridge has to be replaced'

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Roger Millar, Washington state secretary of transportation, from left, Washington Gov. Jay Inslee, Oregon Gov. Kate Brown and Kris Strickler, director of the Oregon Department of Transportation, applaud the signing of a memorandum of intent to replace the Interstate 5 bridge at the Murdock Charitable Trust on Monday morning, Nov. 18, 2019. (Nathan Howard/The Columbian)

Washington Gov. Jay Inslee and Oregon Gov. Kate Brown signed [an agreement](#) Monday morning to work cooperatively to replace the Interstate 5 Bridge between their two states.

The two governors sat at a table at the M.J. Murdock Charitable Trust on The Waterfront Vancouver, with the bridge in the background, to reinvigorate the nascent process to replace the twin spans, which opened in 1917 and 1958.

“I could not be more excited about an endeavor that unites the energies of two states,” Inslee said. “And the reason is that bridges, besides being steel, are essentially monuments to optimism, and our two states are extremely optimistic. We believe in a dynamic growth-oriented future.” Inslee called the bridge an “arterial for the economies and the lives of the entire states of Washington and Oregon.”

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“We know it is mandatory we replace this bridge,” he said. “We do not have an option. This bridge has to be replaced.”

Brown agreed that the two states need to work together.

“It’s high time that we address the congestion between our two states and invest in a bridge that will withstand the test of time,” she said.

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“We have to invest in the bedrock of our states’ economies, and that’s infrastructure,” she said. “When working properly, infrastructure goes unnoticed. But without it, we are literally in for a bumpy ride.”

Neither governor said the project must include extending Oregon’s light-rail line into Vancouver, a major sticking point with some Clark County residents and legislators representing the area in Olympia. The memorandum leaves open the possibility that a bridge could have bus rapid transit, instead of light rail.

“We intend this process to be a data-driven, transparent process,” Inslee said. “We want to look at the data on how to design a bridge that actually will do the best job possible based on data rather than ideology.”

The two-page memorandum of intent signed Monday makes only a few commitments:

- Open a joint Oregon-Washington project office that will re-evaluate the purpose and need and permits for the failed Columbia River Crossing project.
- Assume that any plan for a new bridge will include high-capacity transit.
- Develop a finance plan for the project and assume some costs will be covered by tolls.
- Evaluate project scope, schedule and budget for replacing the bridge.
- Re-engage key stakeholders and the public on replacing the bridge.

The project office, which has not been established, is supposed to provide a draft progress report to the two states by Dec. 1, less than two weeks away, and a final report by Dec. 1, 2020.

The memorandum of intent takes effect immediately and lasts for five years, with the potential for amendment or renewal by the consent of both governors.

Either state can terminate the agreement unilaterally by providing three months' written notice.

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