

QuickPoint! – Money for Nothing

By John A. Charles, Jr.

Over the next five weeks, the Oregon legislature will decide whether to make a down payment of \$1 billion to replace the I-5 Interstate Bridge connecting Portland with Vancouver, WA. The total cost of the bridge is unknown, but is estimated to be at least \$6 billion.

The legislature should reject this request.

There is no immediate need to replace the Interstate Bridge. It has decades of useful life remaining. The much bigger need is to accommodate growth by adding two new bridges - one upstream from the Glen Jackson I-205 Bridge, and one downstream from the I-5 Interstate Bridge. The new crossings would eliminate most congestion on the existing bridges, while providing essential redundancy in the event of a catastrophic earthquake.

We especially need a new Columbia River bridge with a direct connection to Highway 26 near Hillsboro. Not only would this reduce the total amount of driving for thousands of motorists, it would provide much-needed congestion relief at three current bottlenecks: the Sylvan hills tunnels on HW 26, the Fremont Bridge, and I-5 in North Portland.

Planning for a new Interstate Bridge began under Gov. Kitzhaber in 1997, and 25 years later we have nothing to show for it. We should stop fighting the last war. The region needs several new Columbia River crossings, not a single replacement bridge.

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