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ODOT contractors recycle 30,000 cubic yards of waste

It's no small thing to close down a section of Interstate 5.

That makes closing the freeway in order to demolish a bridge, clear the rubble and re-open the road in seven hours or less all the more impressive.

Contractors hired by Oregon Bridge Delivery Partners did just that this summer on Interstate 5 just north of Cottage Grove for the start of a project to demolish and rebuild the River Drive overpass.

At about 10 p.m. on June 6, with traffic whizzing along, crews started the process of closing the northbound lanes of the freeway and detouring traffic to Highway 99 North.

By 10:30 p.m., tractors were spreading sand under the overpass to absorb the shock of falling concrete and protect the freeway. Excavators armed with hydraulic-powered jaws were moving into place, preparing to begin crushing the concrete and rebar that made up the overpass.

With the crunch-fest fully underway by 11 p.m., the team assembled by demolition contractor Holm II of Stayton looked more like a well-practiced dance troupe than a wrecking crew. The equipment operators moved their machines in fluid concert, each knowing what the other was planning

to do. It was economy of movement on a macro scale.

By 4:30 a.m., the northbound section of the overpass was history, and its remnants along with the three feet of shock-absorbing sand were cleared. The freeway was once again open, 30 minutes ahead of schedule.

"It went really well, and I've done quite a few of them in my years," said Larry Billingslea, construction manager for CH2MHill Constructors Inc. "It went better than we figured it would go."

On June 7, the process began again, this time with the southbound section of the overpass slated for elimination.

With the excavators and their attached jaws pulverizing the concrete and rebar, the second night went off without a hitch. One machine worked atop the bridge while the other crunched away from the interstate.

The work slowed northbound traffic a bit as rubber-neckers tried to get a better look. Some local residents stationed themselves on the east side of the freeway to watch the show, no doubt envious of the equipment operators. "This is better than HBO," one of the watchers remarked.

By 12:30 a.m., most of the over-

pass was laying in shambles in the southbound lanes of Interstate 5. By 2 a.m. the demolition was complete and clean up was underway.

"We spent more time cleaning up the second night than we did demolishing the bridge," Billingslea said. "We got done a lot quicker than anyone imagined we would - it was a good effort on everyone's part."

He added that preparation and practice for the demolition phase of the project proved to be the key.

"We rehearsed and rehearsed and rehearsed," Billingslea said. "The week before, we spent several hours going over everything from closing Interstate 5 to the demolition, and it paid off in spades."

It's what contractors did with the roughly 30,000 cubic yards of rubble and waste generated by the demolition that makes this project unique. While the River Drive overpass bridge was being demolished, Ross Brothers, a Salem-based construction contractor responsible for building two new Interstate 5 bridges over Hill Creek and two bridges on the Springfield-Creswell Highway needed nearly 40,000 cubic yards of embankment materials for use beneath the bridges and in widening the

Springfield-Creswell Highway and Interstate 5 interchange.

Working together, the two independent contractors agreed to exchange materials at no cost. Holm II avoided disposal costs, and Ross avoided purchasing fill. That simple recycling exchange produced other economic and environmental dividends. Since the two work sites were less than two miles apart, transportation fuel costs and pollution were vastly decreased.

The replacement of the River Drive overpass is part of the \$35 million Clarks Branch to Tunnel Millrace bridge bundle in Lane and Douglas counties. Funded through the Oregon Transportation Investment Act, the project replaces nine bridges and repairs two others. The replacement of two Interstate 5 bridges over Hill Creek and two bridges on the Springfield-Creswell Highway is part of the \$9 million Oregon Avenue Interstate 5 Overcrossing bridge bundle outside Creswell.

Both projects are funded by ODOT's \$1.3 billion OTIA III State Bridge Delivery Program, which will replace 180 bridges and repair 113. This is the biggest investment in Oregon's highways since the interstates were built 50 years ago.