

The Register-Guard

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Ceremony to get I-5 bridge construction going

By **MARK BAKER**
The Register-Guard

Now comes the ceremonial part of it all.

There have been workshops and open houses and construction delays, but the \$150 million replacement bridge that the state Department of Transportation will build to carry Interstate 5 over the Willamette River is

ready for some formality.

Thus, Sen. Ron Wyden, Rep. Peter DeFazio, ODOT Director Matt Garrett and local officials are scheduled to make an appearance at the work site at 10 a.m. Tuesday for a groundbreaking ceremony and discussion of the project.

Construction to prepare for demolishing the old bridge began in early July. The actual

demolition is scheduled to begin in mid-November and last until March, ODOT spokesman Rick Little said. The bridge is being built as part of the \$1.6 billion Oregon Transportation Investment Act, funded by bonds approved by the 2003 Legislature. The money is being used to replace and repair bridges on critical transportation routes throughout the state. The com-

pleted bridge will be wide enough for three lanes in each direction with shoulder space on the sides.

Motorists have been using a temporary bridge over the Willamette since 2004. The old bridge was closed because of structural deficiencies, prompting a long detour for heavy

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Bridge: Completion in December 2012

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trucks until the temporary bridge could be built. The new bridge will have twin arches anchored on either shore that rise and meet midriver. Its expected completion is in December 2012.

Work crews have built the first of 32 temporary work platforms on the south side of the river underneath the old bridge and a containment structure to catch steel and concrete as they are torn from the old

bridge, Little said. The crews plan to move to the north side sometime this week to continue removing trees and brush, and to build bicycle path detours in east Alton Baker Park, he said.

More than 300 trees are being removed on both sides of the river to create room for the work bridges. ODOT plans to replace each tree it cuts with two native trees and then monitor the saplings' growth for five years.

With improvements planned for

bicycle paths, Pre's Trail, the Alton Baker Park canoe canal and the Eugene Millrace — not to mention new sound and retaining walls and bridge aesthetics that focus on texture, color, railings and lighting — the project is considered ODOT's most elaborate ever in Lane County.

It even has a theme called "Whilamut Passage," a reference to the 200-acre Whilamut Natural Area in Alton Baker Park on either side of the bridge area.

GROUNDBREAKING

When: 10 a.m. Tuesday

Where: Bicycle path under the Franklin Boulevard overpass

Who: Sen. Ron Wyden, Rep. Peter DeFazio and local officials

Parking: Former State Motor Pool parking lot at 3233 Franklin Blvd. in Glenwood; walk to bike path from there or take shuttle service provided.