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ODOT touts TripCheck to prepare for winter travel

You're stuck in traffic, rain is pounding on the roof of your car and your favorite radio personality is warning of congestion ahead. Is there an accident? A lane closure or detour you didn't know about?

You crane your neck out the window to see what is slowing your commute, and as the rain blurs your vision and drenches your face, you can wonder only one thing: "Why didn't I visit TripCheck.com?"

Winter weather and unprecedented levels of highway construction statewide mean drivers should be prepared. The Oregon Department of Transportation's TripCheck web site provides motorists with a one-stop site

for Oregon travel information.

TripCheck is more useful than ever for motorists as construction ramps up on Interstate 5, Interstate 84 and other major routes across the state, mostly due to ODOT's \$1.3 billion OTIA III State Bridge Delivery Program. The bridge program, part of the agency's 10-year, \$3 billion Oregon Transportation Investment Act, is repairing and replacing hundreds of aging bridges across the state. On I-5 alone, drivers will pass through more than 20 active work zones between Portland and Medford in 2007.

At TripCheck.com, visitors can access current construction updates, view the latest

road conditions via road cameras, get winter travel updates, and find tips on how to travel by bus, rail or ride-share. Travelers can easily access information about construction zones and approximate delay times by simply passing their cursor over an icon on a map. Alternately, the 511 system, created by the federal government in 2000, delivers traffic and weather information directly to callers over the phone.

"It's a simple, easy-to-use system that focuses on timely information for Oregon travelers," said Galen McGill, who oversees TripCheck as ODOT's manager of intelligent transportation systems.

"Because of more active construction, more people are checking TripCheck in the summer than ever before, but winter still records the highest activity."

In an average month, 1.2 million unique visitors consult the site, and during severe winter storms, usage has spiked as high as 3.3 million unique visitors.

"We're making resources for drivers available, whether it's information on bridge program projects or winter driving conditions in the mountains," McGill said. "People will be better prepared for the conditions they encounter if they know what to expect."