

Albany Democrat-Herald

50 cents Albany, Oregon

Friday, August 3, 2007

www.democratherald.com

Bridge foresight

Up and down Interstate 5 in Oregon over the past few years, traffic has squeezed through one-lane chutes at numerous sites where bridges were under construction or being repaired. What an inconvenience, some of us may have thought. Wednesday's disastrous collapse of a freeway bridge in Minneapolis shows us how smart ODOT, the governor and the legislature were to launch this massive program of upgrading many bridges we had been using without thinking for years.

The program began in 2003 after the legislature authorized a massive highway maintenance bond issue and raised motor vehicle fees to pay for it over the coming years. ODOT reports that the program is repairing or rebuilding 300 bridges around the state. Eighty of these projects are under way now, and 69 have been completed.

An official said: "ODOT is proactively ensuring the safety of Oregonians and strengthening the state's transportation infrastructure." It may be impossible to make totally sure that no Oregon bridge will ever fall down. But with foresight — and money supplied by the residents — our state is making as sure as it can. (hh)