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Gorge bridges are due for upgrades

By SUE RYAN
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The question of bridge safety and conditions on federal and state bridges in the Gorge has come up since last week's collapse of the I-35W Bridge in Minneapolis.

In the Columbia Gorge, plans have been underway for months to repair and replace several of the bridges on Interstate 84 from The Dalles to the Sandy River.

In 2001, the Oregon Department of Transportation found the state's bridges were weakening. Many required immediate weight restrictions, detours and emergency repairs. The most problematic bridges were the cast-in-place reinforced concrete deck-girder bridges built between 1947 and

1962.

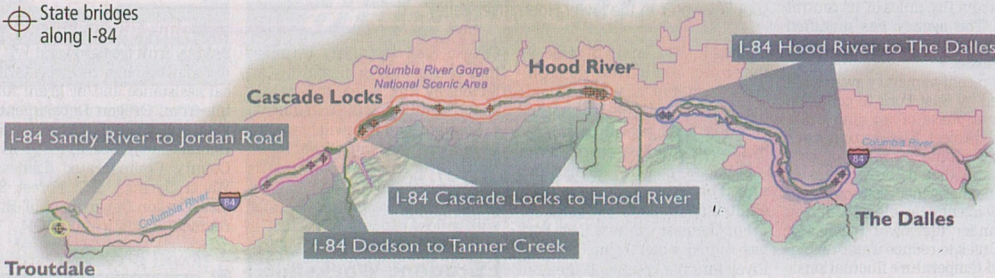
A majority of these bridges showed diagonal-tension cracking and nearly half were along the Interstate 5 and Interstate 84 corridors. In 2003, the state legislature passed the Oregon Transportation Investment Act III, a \$2.46 billion package including \$1.3 billion to repair and replace bridges on the state highway system.

This is the project under which multiple bridges will be fixed or replaced along Interstate 84 in the Gorge with several phases between 2007 and 2011.

The first segment involves four bridges from The Dalles to Hood River. Repairs to take care of cracks in the concrete of the Rock Creek Bridge in Mosier and

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⊕ State bridges
along I-84



Graphic by Oregon Department of Transportation

THIS GRAPHIC shows bridges to be replaced or repaired along Interstate 84 in the Gorge.

BRIDGES

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Hostetler Way Connector Bridge in The Dalles will be done first, due to their condition. Bridges at Fifteen Mile Creek and over Mosier Creek will be replaced.

The second phase involves replacing three bridges and repairing eight between Cascade Locks and Hood River. Those being replaced will be the I-84 connector bridges going east and west at milepost 45. The third bridge will be the one at Oregon Highway 35 at Exit 64. Repairs for the same stretch of highway are planned for bridges over Moody Street, the I-84 Herman Creek connector, I-84 at Wyeth Road, I-84 at Viento Road, the Frontage Road (Second Street) bridge over Union Pacific Railroad, eastbound I-84 over Jaymar Road and eastbound I-84 over Union Pacific Road.

The third phase on I-84 involves replacing the east- and westbound bridges over the Sandy River. Repairs will be done to the east- and westbound bridges over Jordan Road, just to the east of exit 18.

Two other primary bridges in Hood River County had inspections in May. The Port of Cascade Locks owns and operates the Bridge of the Gods while the Port of Hood River owns and operates the Hood River Bridge.

While each port paid for biannual inspections before 2007, this was the first year the state Oregon Department of Transportation did the inspections under a new federal mandate.

While the Hood River Bridge did receive a 24.5 sufficiency rating (on a scale of 1-100) under the inspection; the rating doesn't mean the bridge's integrity is compromised.

"It (the rating) is a lot of things besides just the structure," said Linda Shames, bridge manager for the Port of Hood River. "It's more about how the bridge serves the community itself; can it handle commerce, the distance to another bridge in case of closure and whether or not there are bicycle lanes provided are only some of the many factors."

The major recommendation from inspectors was to paint the Hood River Bridge. During its examination, the Burgess & Niple team did what is known as a "fracture critical" inspection. That looks at every bolt, joint and truss within arm's reach. The inspectors use rock-climbing gear in order to access all part of the bridge.

The team repeated that approach when it inspected the Bridge of the Gods at Cascade Locks. Finance Manager Pat Albaugh said the bridge was found to be in "amazingly good shape."

Bridge of the Gods had a 68 percent sufficiency rating.