



2/27/09



Oregon Department
of Transportation
Region 1

QUICK FACTS ABOUT

New Load Limits on the OR 43: WILLAMETTE RIVER BRIDGE

(Linking the communities of Oregon City and West Linn)

Summary:

The Oregon Department of Transportation is placing a new weight restriction to the Willamette River Bridge. The historic bridge built in 1922, connects Oregon City and West Linn. The structure will be closed to all commercial motor vehicles and all vehicles weighing more than 14 tons, effective Wednesday, March 4, 2009.

A complete closure of the bridge is planned for construction of the OR 43: Willamette River Bridge Rehabilitation Project sometime in late fall or early winter 2009. The project is scheduled to be completed sometime in 2011. The detour route during the full closure will be the I-205 George Abernethy Bridge, currently the same detour route for this weight restriction.

1. What is the current condition of the bridge? Is it safe?

Recent inspections of the historic bridge uncovered areas of concern in a few floor beams, which could be overloaded by the concentrated weight of larger commercial vehicles. Limiting the weight of vehicles to 14 tons will allow most motorists to cross. The load limit restriction will be 28,000 lbs or 14 tons.

2. When was the bridge last inspected?

The bridge is inspected on a two year cycle. The last regularly scheduled inspection was in 2008. However, as part of the preparation for the upcoming rehabilitation project, we continue to perform more focused evaluations and will continue to review the bridge for concerns.

3. What kinds of trucks/vehicles are restricted? What do they look like typically?

All commercial motor vehicles, including trucks, buses, and local delivery trucks are restricted from the bridge, as well as any vehicle over 14 tons. Most of these vehicles have already taken this bridge off of their routes because of the low clearance and narrow lanes.

(over)

4. Are buses restricted too? How will buses get back and forth across the river? How much time will that add to their route?

Yes. The load restriction applies to TriMet buses too. TriMet has already rerouted their buses off of the bridge. Routes #35-Macadam and #154-Willamette were rerouted onto I-205. On the West Linn side, the north and southbound stops closest to the river have been closed. With this change, the schedules have varied only minimally.

5. When will it be fixed? How long will it take?

ODOT will begin a project to rehabilitate the historic bridge in the fall or winter of 2009. The rehabilitation project will require a full bridge closure to all modes of travel and is expected to take from 18 to 24 months to complete once the construction starts.

6. Is it safe to go over now? I have a large SUV can I cross the bridge?

Yes. As long as your vehicle is not a commercial truck, fits within the size restrictions and is less than 14 tons.

7. Why aren't you closing it to all vehicles now?

Because cars, light trucks and SUV's can safely cross the bridge within the weight restriction. It's only commercial motor vehicles, trucks, buses, and local delivery trucks that pose a concern.

8. I've heard that the gas and communication lines currently attached to the bridge will need to be relocated. When will this take place?

Very soon. Utilities companies are poised to start work building scaffolding below the bridge deck off one side of the bridge to relocate their lines. They must do this in advance of the start of the ODOT project. This work will likely require at least 5 days and maybe up to a 10 day closure, starting in mid-March or early April.

9. What about emergency vehicles? School buses?

Fire trucks and school buses do not use the bridge. They currently use the I-205 Abernethy Bridge due to the height restrictions and extremely narrow lane width. Ambulances will continue to use the bridge, except during the full closure.

Other questions about Load Limits on this bridge?

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