

I-5: South Jefferson to U.S. 20 Environmental Assessment Project

Preliminary Draft Purpose and Need (Revised June 2011)

Purpose:

The purpose of the I-5 South Jefferson to US 20 Environmental Assessment project is to reduce congestion, improve the operational efficiency, and reduce the crash rate of the Interstate 5 (I-5) and of the five interchanges in the Albany-Millersburg area of northern Linn County, Oregon.

Need:

- As traffic volumes increase on I-5 the potential for crashes is expected to increase. When crashes do occur on I-5 motorists in the region experience significant delays and congestion because traffic must be rerouted onto systems that are not designed to carry interstate traffic. Additionally, US20 and OR99E experience crash rates that are above the average for Urban Principal Arterials within the influence of the interchange.
- The existing interchanges in the project area are spaced too close together and do not meet current interchange spacing standards. The short distance between these interchanges increases travel delays and the potential for crashes as vehicles change lanes as they enter and exit the freeway.
- The South Jefferson, View Crest, Murder Creek, Knox Butte, and Santiam Highway interchanges that serve Millersburg and Albany are in excess of 50 years old and are functionally obsolete. These interchanges were designed and built in the 1950s when I-5 was built and the designs of the interchanges do not meet current and anticipated future transportation needs. As a result, the existing I-5 interchanges currently experience congestion and congestion is expected to increase in the future due to a projected increase in the region's residential, industrial, and commercial development. By 2035 and without improvement, all interchanges are projected to operate below acceptable operating standards. These conditions affect access to businesses and homes in the Albany/Millersburg area and create travel delays on I-5.
- I-5 is an important part of the region's transportation system. It moves goods and people through the region. This section has been experiencing increasing delays and congestion as levels of development and traffic volumes in the region increase over time, leading to inefficient access to, and mobility on, the transportation system in the urban Albany/Millersburg area of northern Linn County. The Oregon Highway Plan (OHP) provides the operating standards used to measure congestion. Similar to the interchanges, by 2035 and without improvements, all segments of I-5 between the interchanges would not meet the OHP's acceptable operating standards.