



Oregon Department of Transportation

# NEWS RELEASE

**Region 4** *Wasco, Sherman, Gilliam, Jefferson, Wheeler, Deschutes, Crook, Klamath and Lake Counties*

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## ***US 97, Biggs Rapids – Sam Hill Bridge closes Sep. 8 for final stage of construction***

GOLDENDALE – The final stage of a project that is replacing the US 97, Biggs Rapids – Sam Hill Memorial Bridge concrete deck will begin a week after Labor Day, announces the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT). **Starting Monday, September 8, 2008, the bridge will be closed to all traffic until work is completed in early 2009.**

Since mid-August, motorists have experienced night time single lane closures on the bridge as construction crews prepare for the full closure in September. The preparation work allows WSDOT's contractor, Mowat Construction of Woodinville, Wash. to begin work on the southern half of the bridge deck immediately after the full closure takes effect.

During the full closure, crews will demolish and reconstruct the deck on the southern half of the bridge as well as install improved, pedestrian-friendly bridge rail. "WSDOT is excited to resume and complete construction on the Biggs Bridge," said Columbia Gorge Area Engineer Chris Tams. "We appreciate the patience and understanding of drivers as we work to complete this project."

The first closure of the bridge began on January 3, 2008. Crews reopened the bridge to traffic a few days before Memorial Day weekend, and have kept it open throughout the summer tourist season, at the request of the local communities.

A full closure of the bridge is necessary to perform the work as quickly as possible under the safest working conditions. It also ensures the best quality construction is achieved; a full closure

eliminates vibration due to traffic traveling on the bridge and allows the concrete to cure with minimal disturbance.

The Biggs Bridge was built in the early 1960s using a lightweight concrete for the deck slab which, despite constant maintenance, began deteriorating at a rapid rate. Originally slated to begin in 2010, the deck replacement project was pushed ahead two years because of growing concerns about keeping the bridge in service. Thanks to improvements in materials and proactive traffic control during construction, the new deck will have a life span of approximately 70 years.

During construction, detour routes will be available. Detour routes include US 197 Dalles Bridge via I-84 or State Route 14. Another option for eastbound traffic is to cross at the I-82 Columbia River Bridge. In addition, carpool match information is available at [www.wsdot.wa.gov/Projects/US97/BiggsBridge/travelerinfo](http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/Projects/US97/BiggsBridge/travelerinfo).

Advance warning signs will be placed ahead of the construction area, and motorists are asked to observe and adhere to the posted speed limits when driving through the work zone. Motorists are also reminded that all traffic fines are doubled within a construction work zone when workers are present (RCW 46.61.527).

For weekly updates on this and all other state traffic impacts in the region, please visit the WSDOT Southwest Region Weekly Travel Advisory Web page: [www.wsdot.wa.gov/Regions/SouthWest/Construction/default.htm](http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/Regions/SouthWest/Construction/default.htm).

For more information about the Biggs Rapids – Sam Hill Memorial Bridge Deck Replacement project, please contact WSDOT's Columbia Gorge Area Engineering Office by phone (866-279-0730), by e-mail ([swgorge@wsdot.wa.gov](mailto:swgorge@wsdot.wa.gov)) or visit the project page at: [www.wsdot.wa.gov/Projects/US97/BiggsBridge](http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/Projects/US97/BiggsBridge).

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