

Oregon Department of Transportation

# NEWS RELEASE

**Region 1** Columbia, Washington, Multnomah, Clackamas and Hood River Counties

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06-032 R1

**For More Information:**

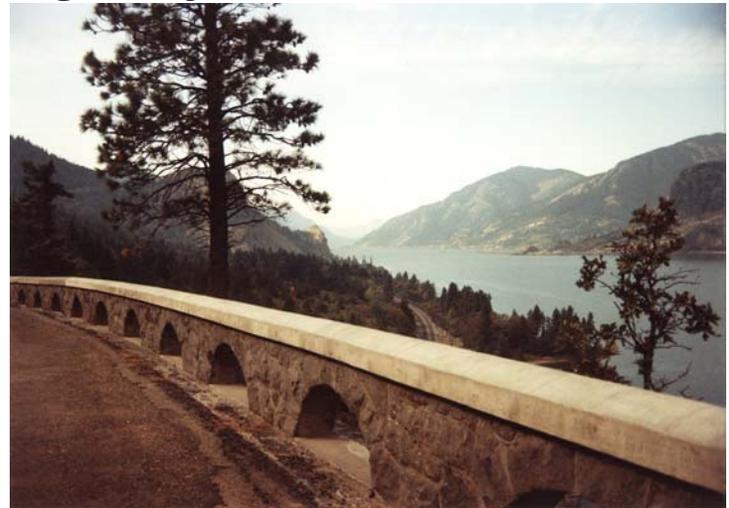
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Regional Projects Website: [www.oregon.gov/ODOT/HWY/REGION1](http://www.oregon.gov/ODOT/HWY/REGION1)

## Oregon Transportation Commission approves revised Historic Columbia River Highway Master Plan

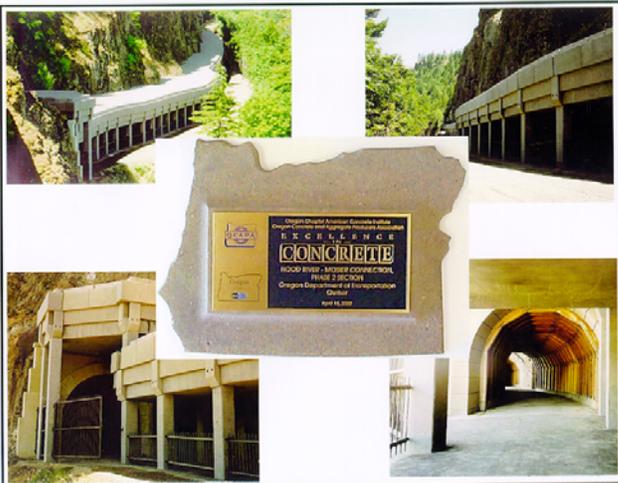
*The plan spells out how the historic highway should be restored by its 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary*

The Oregon Transportation Commission has approved revisions to a document spelling out the future for the Historic Columbia River Highway (HCRH).

The revised *Historic Columbia River Highway Master Plan* summarizes the vision for the HCRH, documents the progress on restoring and reconnecting the historic highway, and lists the additional project proposals that would complete that restoration and reconnection.



*"On starting the surveys, our first business was to find the beauty spots, or those points where the most beautiful things along the line might be seen in the best advantage, and, if possible, to locate the road in such a way as to reach them."*  
—Engineer and designer Samuel Lancaster (*Oregon Journal*, 1915)



### The Historic Columbia River Highway:

#### *"The King of Roads"*

The HCRH, constructed between 1913 and 1922, was the first scenic highway in America; the first major paved highway in the Pacific Northwest; and the first large-scale application of cliff-face road building to highway construction ever attempted in the U.S.

([http://egov.oregon.gov/ODOT/HWY/HCRH/images/LAYOUT\\_1.pdf](http://egov.oregon.gov/ODOT/HWY/HCRH/images/LAYOUT_1.pdf)).

Portions of the HCRH between Dodson and Hood River were sacrificed in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s for construction of the water-level route that became Interstate 84. By the time I-84 was completed, the HCRH had already suffered the ravages of time and weather: The Mosier Twin Tunnels were closed after rockfalls blocked entrances or collapsed tunnel ceilings. The historic highway that once stretched from Portland to Pendleton was literally in pieces

([http://egov.oregon.gov/ODOT/HWY/HCRH/images/LAYOUT\\_2.pdf](http://egov.oregon.gov/ODOT/HWY/HCRH/images/LAYOUT_2.pdf)).

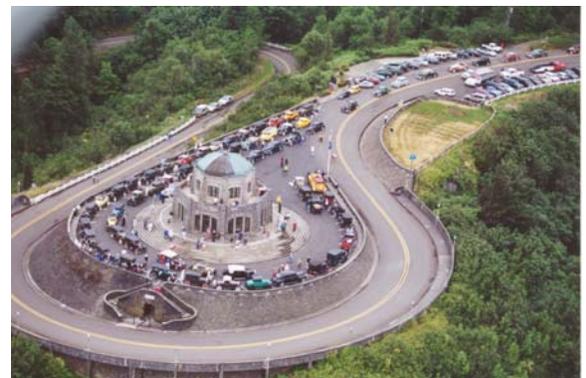
Things began to turn around in the 1980's. The Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area Act directed the state to prepare a plan to connect abandoned segments of the historic highway as pedestrian and bicycle trails. The Oregon Legislature declared that it is the public policy of the state to restore and reconnect the pieces of this highway. And lawmakers created an advisory body, the Historic Columbia River Highway Advisory Committee, to oversee the highway and write the master plan detailing how to accomplish this lofty goal.

In 1996, the HCRH Advisory Committee produced the first HCRH Master Plan. In 2003, the committee began the process of updating the plan, expanding on the vision in the original document, detailing the progress already made and issuing the challenge to complete the job of returning the historic highway to its rightful place in the future of Oregon's transportation system by 2016—the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the dedication of the highway

([http://egov.oregon.gov/ODOT/HWY/HCRH/docs/hcrh\\_master\\_plan.pdf](http://egov.oregon.gov/ODOT/HWY/HCRH/docs/hcrh_master_plan.pdf)).

### **Completed Restoration Projects**

Through the efforts of ODOT, the Federal Highway Administration's Western Federal Lands Highway Division, the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department and the U.S. Forest Service, the historic highway where cars still travel has been rehabilitated to its 1920's appearance; the Vista House has been restored; and 11 miles of abandoned highway have been developed as trails for walkers and bicyclists ([http://egov.oregon.gov/ODOT/HWY/HCRH/images/LAYOUT\\_3.pdf](http://egov.oregon.gov/ODOT/HWY/HCRH/images/LAYOUT_3.pdf)).



### **Proposed Restoration Projects**

Seven proposed projects estimated to cost \$55 million would rehabilitate another 12 miles ([http://egov.oregon.gov/ODOT/HWY/HCRH/images/LAYOUT\\_4.pdf](http://egov.oregon.gov/ODOT/HWY/HCRH/images/LAYOUT_4.pdf)). The Master Plan provides details.

**Editors:** For more information: <http://egov.oregon.gov/ODOT/HWY/HCRH/>

## ODOT ##