

I-5: Glendale to Hugo Paving and Sexton Climbing Lane Frequently Asked Questions

Is ODOT widening all of I-5 from Hugo to Glendale?

No. The only section of highway that will be widened is the northbound section of I-5 that approaches Sexton pass (mile point 66.7 to mile point 69.5), where a climbing lane will be located.

The climbing lane will be about 2.8 miles in length, starting as an extension of the northbound on-ramp at the Hugo interchange (Exit 66) and ending just beyond the crest of Sexton Mountain Pass. The new lane will be 12 feet wide and be located where the right shoulder is now. The 10-foot shoulder and drainage ditch will be replaced to the right of the climbing lane.

What is a climbing lane?

A climbing lane is a third lane, located to the right of the other two travel lanes, designated for large trucks and other slow-moving vehicles. Climbing lanes are often located in steep areas where the uphill grade is 4-6 percent and trucks and vehicles such as RVs have difficulty maintaining interstate highway speeds. Climbing lanes can help ease congestion, improve the flow of traffic and increase safety on interstate highways.



Slow-moving trucks occupy both northbound I-5 travel lanes and the shoulder as they climb Sexton Mountain.

Why is a climbing lane necessary in this area?

Some of the steepest grades on the Interstate Highway System are located in southern Oregon, between Hugo and Glendale. Most freeway climbs are built on grades of 5.0 percent or less. In southern Oregon, a northbound I-5 driver will climb Sexton Mountain (maximum grade 6.13 percent), Smith Hill (6.74) and Stage Road Pass (5.00). Southbound I-5 drivers will encounter a 6.00 percent grade at Stage Road, 6.12 at Smith Hill, and 6.50 on Sexton Mountain.

On these steep grades, trucks frequently slow to less than 30 mph while passenger vehicles continue at 65 mph or more. This difference in speed can be hazardous, particularly when one slow-moving truck attempts to pass another, thereby blocking both lanes for most of the climb up the hill. Some cars may be forced to brake hard or suddenly change lanes to avoid a collision.

At other times, slow moving trucks shift onto the shoulder and stay there as they climb the hill, causing several problems. First, when trucks drive on the shoulder, they leave no room for disabled vehicles, increasing the risk that a truck might hit a person changing a flat tire. Second, shoulders are usually not as wide as the travel lanes, meaning a truck on the shoulder would have to straddle the fog line, or possibly slide along the guardrail causing damage to the truck and the rail. Also, the shoulders of Interstate highways are not engineered to take the same pounding as the travel lanes, since the pavement on the shoulders is usually not as thick as the travel lanes.

A third lane will provide space for the slowest vehicles to move out of the way of drivers who can maintain their speed, reducing the likelihood of crashes while also providing a safe place for disabled vehicles.

Are there any similar interstate truck climbing lanes in Oregon?

Yes. On Interstate 84, there is a 7-mile truck climbing lane east of Pendleton. On I-5, there is a 3-mile climbing lane for northbound traffic south of Salem.

Also, ODOT is constructing three short climbing lanes along I-5 north of Roseburg. One is located in the southbound direction at Rice Hill (mile point 147) and there is one in each direction on the hill between Sutherlin and Oakland (mile point 137-138). Each of these climbing lanes is about one mile in length. Construction should be completed by summer 2012.



The truck climbing lane, at right, and the center lane are occupied by semis as a pickup passes in the left lane of Interstate 84, about 10 miles east of Pendleton.

Why are you only building one climbing lane in this area?

ODOT only has funding to construct one climbing lane as part of this project. Of the six potential climbing lanes in this segment of I-5, ODOT determined the greatest need exists at the northbound Sexton site.

While there is no funding to build other climbing lanes at this time, the intent is to eventually add lanes on each of the three passes between Glendale and Hugo.

As part of the current project, ODOT completed drilling, survey, and initial design work for climbing lanes on southbound Sexton and southbound Stage Road passes, which will be the next lanes built if more funding becomes available in the future.

Will ODOT make other safety improvements with this project?

Yes. The southbound curves just south of the Smith Hill summit will be worked on to make them safer. The roadway will be shifted slightly, but will not be widened. Other safety improvements include fixing old or damaged guardrail and replacing median barrier throughout the project, and installing new signs in some locations.

Will ODOT need to acquire private property for this project?

No permanent right of way will be needed for the project. Early in the design ODOT thought temporary construction easements may be needed in a couple locations, but has determined that these will not be needed either.

How will construction impact traffic to and from local businesses in Glendale, Sunny Valley and Wolf Creek?

Local businesses will not experience direct impacts during construction. However, the project will require short-term ramp closures for paving. ODOT will alert nearby businesses prior to these closures.

How will the traveling public be impacted by construction?

As with any freeway paving project, one lane must be closed to allow for the grinding and paving work. In most cases, this work can be completed with a minimum of delay to drivers.

Most of the climbing lane work can be done without lane closures. However, some temporary lane closures will be required, particularly where the existing roadway is already narrow, such as the section near the summit.

ODOT will notify the local media of these impacts prior to construction. Because this section involves paving through several steep, curvy sections, drivers are advised to slow down and drive with caution through each work zone. Motorists are advised to visit www.tripcheck.com for the latest travel information.

Will the paving be done at day or night, weekday or weekends?

Because of the volume of traffic on I-5 during the day and because long segments of the project are on steep uphill grades, paving during the day on the hills will result in extremely long back-ups on I-5. To avoid traffic delays, much of the work on these sections will occur during the night. In order to get the project done more quickly, paving on the flatter and downhill sections may occur during the day as well. The actual construction schedule won't be set until the contractor is selected. At that time the decision will be made regarding whether weekend paving will be required to complete the job.

Will the climbing lane increase noise in this area?

Road construction is a noisy activity and while the project is being built there will be temporary increases in local noise levels. However, the completed climbing lane will not result in additional freeway noise.

How does ODOT minimize negative effects projects may have on the environment?

ODOT is required to follow an extensive list of state and federal environmental regulations on all construction projects. Protections for threatened and endangered species, wetlands, air,

water, historic and cultural resources, as well as low-income, minority and other protected classes of people must be considered during the design process and factored into how the project is built.

Will any endangered species be impacted by this project?

ODOT evaluates all projects for effects on fish and wildlife species. Whenever possible, work in streams that carry fish is avoided. When it cannot be avoided, fish passage is maintained or improved and impacts to the stream are minimized. *The I-5 Glendale to Hugo Paving and Sexton Climbing Lane* project will not require any fish-passage work. In addition, stormwater from the project area will be treated to reduce pollutants reaching area streams.

The only endangered wildlife species near the project limits is the northern spotted owl. ODOT will be developing a Biological Assessment and working with the US Fish & Wildlife Service regarding construction noise impacts.

No specific laws require a reduction in effects on non-protected wildlife on highway projects. However, where an unusually high number of crashes occur due to wildlife crossing the roadway, ODOT can evaluate the conditions to determine if anything can be done to reduce the problem. Generally, the case to make improvements for wildlife must also show there will also be an improvement in driver safety.



The 302-foot long Graves Creek Bridge is one of three locations in Sunny Valley where wildlife can cross under I-5.

Has ODOT considered adding features to protect wildlife to this project?

Bridges and culverts can sometimes aid wildlife in crossing a highway, but it is not easy to judge whether such a feature would actually be used, or where the best location might be to ensure animals will use it. The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) evaluated the *I-5 Glendale to Hugo Paving and Sexton Climbing Lane* project in terms of enhancements that may protect wildlife and identified some features that could be added to the project to aid wildlife in crossing the roadway. However, ODFW and ODOT agree that a study of regional wildlife movements and habitat would have to be conducted before committing to the construction of wildlife crossings on I-5 or other highways. Such a study was conducted on Highway 97 south of Bend before determining such crossing features would be beneficial in that location.

In general, most roadkill on I-5 is from deer, with limited incidence of bear, elk, or smaller animals, including dogs. Although the data is limited, the section of I-5 through Sunny Valley appears to have a higher incidence of roadkill than other areas between Glendale and Hugo. However, the Sunny Valley area already has three crossings under the freeway, which indicates adding more bridges or culverts won't automatically reduce roadkill. Instead, ODFW recommends adding wildlife fencing in the area to direct wildlife and to the under-crossings. ODOT cannot use existing project funding for this issue, but is seeking additional funds to include the fencing in the project.

Why did you change the name of this project?

For the past several years, this project had been known as the *I-5: Jumpoff Joe to Glendale Paving & Climbing Lanes* project. Since ODOT can only build one climbing lane as part of this project, we needed to change the name to be more accurate. Also, the southern paving limits are closer to the Hugo interchange than Jumpoff Joe Creek. The new name, *I-5: Glendale to Hugo Paving and Sexton Climbing Lane*, better reflects the project area and follows ODOT naming conventions.

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