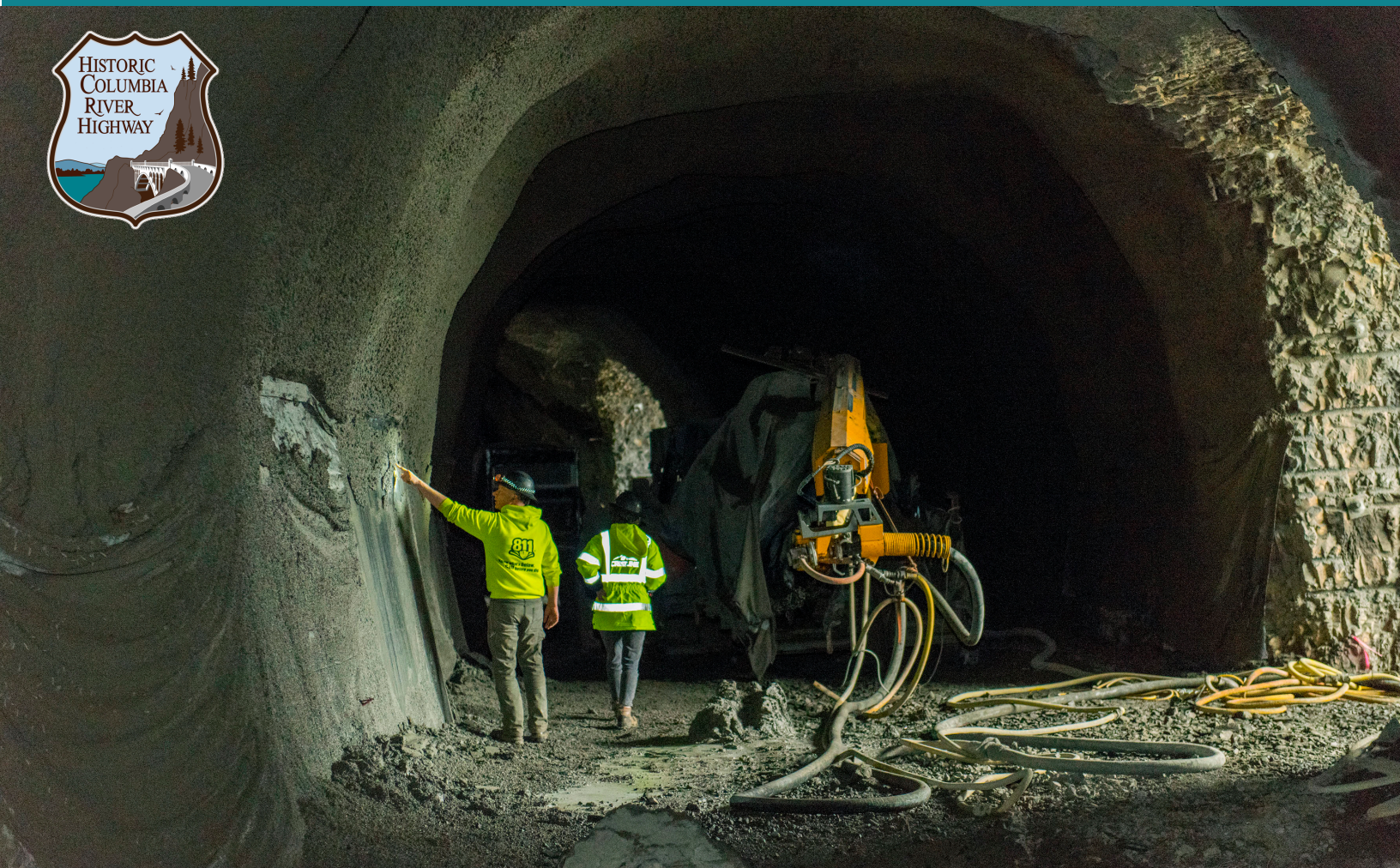




# 2023 RECONNECTION REPORT

## Historic Columbia River Highway State Trail



*Clockwise from top left: Framing for masonry wall at Mitchell Point; the same segment of wall about four months later after hand-placed stones were added; inside the Mitchell Point Tunnel with light coming in through the windows.*

Remember · Restore · Reconnect



# Visualizing Reconnection

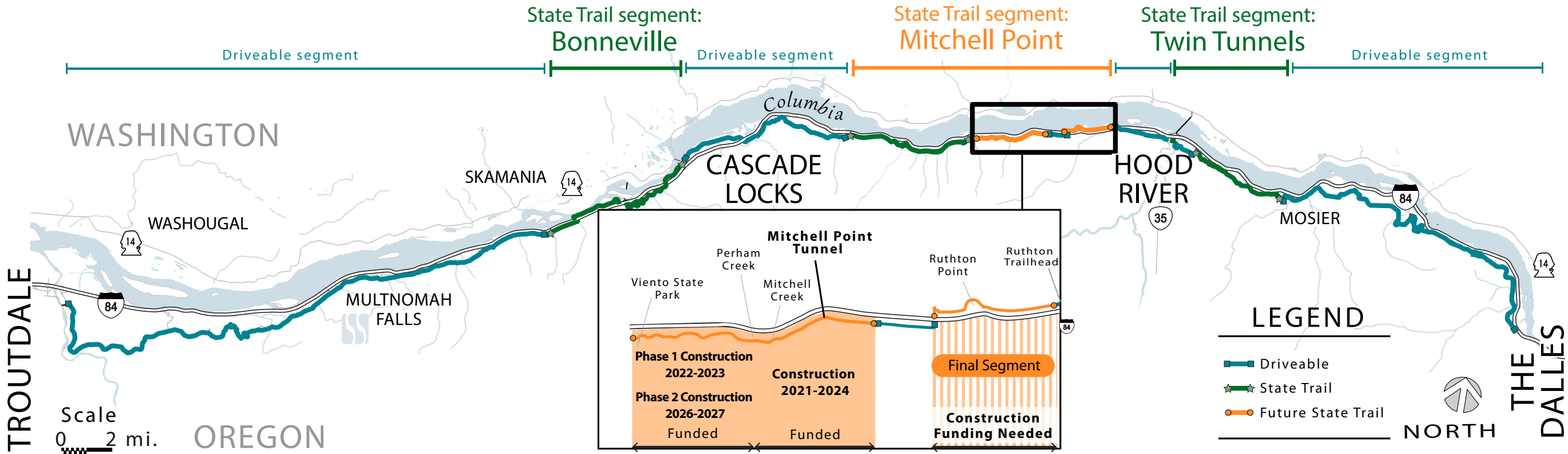
“For decades, the view from the Mitchell Point Tunnel was the high point of any trip through the Gorge. When the new tunnel opens in 2024, you’ll see why.”

Arthur Babitz, Historic Columbia River Advisory Committee chair



In 1986, 22 miles of trail awaited reconnection.

Now, just over 1.6 miles need funding to be reconnected.



## Viento State Park To Mitchell Point

Construction underway!  
Funding secured for Phase 2 construction

This segment of trail connects the existing Historic Highway State Trail at the Viento Trailhead to Mitchell Point and includes reconnecting 0.67 miles of original sections of the Historic Highway.

The project includes upgrades to the Viento Trailhead and improvements to the South Viento State Park Campground, including a new restroom. This segment of trail will use two bridges to provide access across Perham and Mitchell Creeks.

Construction on the first 2 miles of trail occurs 2022-2024. Recently awarded Federal Lands Access Program funding will allow for construction of the final 0.7 miles in 2026-2027.

**Length:**  
2.7 miles

**Schedule:** Phase 1 construction: 2022 to late 2023. Phase 2 construction: 2026-2027.

## Mitchell Point Tunnel

Construction underway!

The iconic Mitchell Point Tunnel was a highlight of the original Historic Highway, but the construction of Interstate 84 destroyed the tunnel. Beginning in spring 2021, this project formed a 655-foot tunnel with five arched windows at using rock blasting and excavation.

At the west entrance to the tunnel, there is an overlook area. Each tunnel entrance, or portal, has stone features framing it. A plaza on the west side of the tunnel will have picnic tables, rest and pause areas, an overlook area and an expanded restroom at the trailhead.

**Length:** 1.5 miles (with a 655-foot tunnel)

**Schedule:** Construction began in early 2021 and continues to 2024.

## Ruthton Point To Hood River

(\$45-49 million in funding needed)

Just west of the City of Hood River, a section of the Historic Highway with world-class views of the Columbia River Gorge awaits reconnection as part of the Historic Highway State Trail.

This trail segment will extend eastward from Mitchell Point on Mitchell Point Drive, cross underneath I-84 and proceed east to Hood River. We will build a trail on the north side of I-84 to connect with Ruthton Trailhead, including restoring a section of original Historic Highway.

ODOT submitted a funding application to the Nationally Significant Federal Lands and Tribal Projects Program for project construction and will continue to pursue funding opportunities in 2023.

**Length:** 1.6 miles

**Schedule:** Design remains in early stages. We anticipate reaching 50% design milestone in fall 2023.

## Remember

We remember the high-quality design and aesthetics of the Historic Columbia River Highway and strive to create new segments of the State Trail in the same vein. Constructed between 1913 and 1922, the Historic Columbia River Highway overcame all odds. This road would lay lightly on the land and take its users to the most beautiful spots and breathtaking vistas of the Columbia River Gorge.

## Restore

We strive to restore existing segments and use the 100+ year old facility hand-crafted by the original road engineers/visionaries. In the early 1950s, many miles of the Historic Columbia River Highway were damaged or destroyed to pave the way for Interstate 84. The passage of the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area Act in 1986 motivated the Oregon State Legislature to commit to restore the entire Historic Highway to its glory days of the 1920s.

## Reconnect

Our 37-year goal is to reconnect and create a continuous Historic Columbia River Highway between Troutdale and The Dalles for everyone's transportation and recreation use. Some segments are accessible to cars and cyclists. Some segments, known as the Historic Highway State Trail, will be accessible only by people walking, rolling or biking.

*Left: Walking on the Viento State Park to Mitchell Point segment along stacked masonry walls. Right: Looking out the west entrance of the Mitchell Point Tunnel with steel framing visible.*



### Historic Columbia River Highway Advisory Committee

**Arthur Babitz, Chair**  
Hood River County

**Tricia Forsi**  
Multnomah County Representative

**Leti Valle Moretti**  
Hood River County Representative,  
Governor Appointee

**Judy Davis**  
Wasco County Representative

**Lisa Farquharson**  
Wasco County,  
Governor Appointee

**Ernest Drapela, Vice Chair**  
Multnomah County,  
Governor Appointee

**Christine Curran**  
State Historic Preservation Office

**Nastassja Olson**  
Travel Oregon

**Clay Courtright**  
Oregon Parks and Recreation  
Department

**Rian Windsheimer**  
Oregon Department of Transportation

### Project Partners:



TRAVEL  OREGON



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