



Neighbors For A Better Crossing, Inc

INTERSTATE BRIDGE REPLACEMENT PROGRAM'S \$13-\$17 BILLION FRAUD & MISMANAGEMENT, PERPETUATED BY MAYOR ANNE MCENERNY-OGLE & GOVERNOR TINA KOTEK

When any government agency with help from elected officials, conspire to fraudulently misrepresent the true purpose of a project such as the Interstate Bridge Replacement (IBR) Program, they need to be held accountable. What started as a \$4 billion project to solve traffic congestion at the I-5 crossing is now at an unjustifiable cost of \$13-\$17 billion! All for a 5 mile strip of pavement with a 7/10th of mile river crossing that will do little to solve traffic congestion at the crossing.

How much is \$13-\$17 billion? The US Navy's newest aircraft carrier [USS Gerald R. Ford \(CVN-78\)](#) was \$13 billion. With cost overruns, IBR's project could exceed twice the cost of the USS Gerald R. Ford. To repay \$13-\$17 billion, both states will impose large tax increases on OR & WA residents and heavy tolls at the I-5 crossing, impacting every resident and businesses in WA & OR. It will substantially increase the cost of living in both states, which is bad news for residents with limited incomes. Worse yet, is the impact on property owners that will be displaced by IBR's bridge project, which has misrepresented the true condition of the Interstate Bridge and its ability to meet to seismic structural standards.

Fraudulent Misrepresentation is defined as fraud that occurs when someone knowingly makes a false statement, does not believe it to be true, or makes it recklessly with the intent to deceive. Victims are entitled to claim damages against entities & participants involved in the fraud.

When the Interstate Bridge Replacement (IBR) project began in 2019, it was primarily administered by the same core leadership team that oversaw the previously failed Columbia River Crossing (CRC). Clearly, the IBR core team was fully aware of a [2006 Columbia River Crossing study](#) that assessed seismic vulnerabilities and retrofit options for the existing Interstate Bridge and concluded that it was feasible to retrofit/upgrade the existing bridge to the current seismic safety standards--**The Executive Summary on page 1-1 is a "must read!** The core group proceeded to resurrect the failed CRC project by changing its name to The Interstate Bridge Replacement (IBR) Program, and began pushing a false narrative the Interstate Bridge had to be replaced because it couldn't be retrofitted or upgraded to current seismic standards. The IBR then publicized a computer-generated [fake video of the Interstate Bridge](#) collapsing during an earthquake, to emphasize the Interstate Bridge was seismically unsafe... **all without scientific data to prove their claims.**

Indications are that Greg Johnson (fmr Program Administrator), Ray Mabey (an Assistant Program Administrator), Frank Green (an Assistant Program Administrator), Lee Beyer (Vice Chair Oregon Transportation Commission), Kris Strickler (fmr ODOT director), and other advisory leaders were either involved in organizing a systematic campaign of false misrepresentations, actively engaged in perpetrating those misrepresentations, or were in a position to know about those misrepresentations but kept silent. With the exception of Greg Johnson, all were former members of CRC's core management, so they knew their claims about the Interstate Bridge were false.

Mayor Anne McEnerny-Ogle was the Clark County Neighborhood representative to the CRC from its inception. She is fully aware of the 2006 CRC study, and yet she's continues to fraudulently misrepresent the bridge's structural strength ever since. Why would Mayor Anne McEnerny-Ogle continue to support IBR's fraudulent narrative about the bridge when she knew it isn't true?

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We were told the IBR project would solve traffic congestion at the I-5 crossing, but after spending \$273-\$280 million, IBR's Project Administrator Greg Johnson's was forced to admit IBR's bridge will do little to solve traffic congestion at the crossing! He also admitted [the IBR is "basically the same \[CRC project\]" that failed](#). So what happened? Don't look to Mayor Anne McEnerny-Ogle and Governor Tina Kotek for any answers or assistance, as they've both been strong advocates for this failed project when they know the narrative about the Interstate Bridge being seismically unsafe & non-upgradable is false. Is their support for the IBR project really about generating additional taxes & tolls?

Let's follow the fraud and mismanagement:

1. IBR claims about the seismic & structural condition of the Interstate Bridge were false from the beginning.

Fact: The ["Beautiful & Historic Interstate Bridge"](#) is structurally sound today and will remain strong through periodic structural upgrades & retrofits mandated for all bridges, and it's much newer than most people think. While it's true that the initial span of the Interstate Bridge was completed in 1917, that initial span of 3-lanes was structurally retrofitted & upgraded in 1958 when a new 2nd span of 3-lanes was added. That makes the Interstate Bridge seismically & structurally a 1958 bridge. Compared to 262 older Pacific NW bridges (85 in OR & 177 in WA) that were built in 1917 or earlier, the Interstate Bridge is structurally one of Northwest's newer & stronger bridges.

OR & WA residents admire their older bridges for their historic character, which adds to the natural beauty of the Pacific NW. In 1982, the Interstate Bridge was listed on the [National Register of Historic Places](#). As such, it is federally protected. Any attempt by the IBR to replace the bridge will be resolved in Federal Court.

2. Despite receiving a \$1 Million grant from the Federal Highway Administration for a new engineering study of the Interstate bridge's seismic condition, there's no indication that such a study was ever conducted. What happened to the \$1 million? If the IBR conducted a new study, show us the results.

Fact: In 2022, [IBR received a \\$1 million grant](#) from the Federal Highway Administration to study the bridge's seismic and geotechnical conditions, including on Hayden Island. Despite this, neither the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) nor the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) has released any current bridge-specific seismic assessments. Without a new and independent seismic study proving that the bridge is no longer able to be upgraded or retrofitted to earthquake standards, IBR's repeated claims about the Interstate Bridge's unsafe seismic & structural condition are without merit.

3. The IBR stated for years that the cost of the project would be \$4-\$6 billion, however project staff was caught intentionally hiding the actual cost from lawmakers. The actual estimated cost was subsequently revealed to exceed \$17 billion. Hiding project cost figures from lawmakers and taxpayers is fraudulent!

Fact: On January 7, 2026 noted [Oregon economist Joe Cortright estimated IBR's project costs](#) had doubled to about \$13 billion... and could exceed \$17 billion. That same day, [Oregon Journalism's Nigel Jaquiss reported](#) that IBR staff hid information about ballooning cost from lawmakers by telling a bi-state panel it didn't have new numbers.

4. Regarding the extension of TRIMET's Light Rail to Vancouver, the IBR claimed in their Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (DSEIS) that it was financially justified by an estimated 26,000–33,000 riders/day. In 2025, their estimate proved to be inflated by a factor of 10X.

Fact: As reported in a [Clark County Today article dated Oct 27, 2025](#), the projected IBR Light Rail ridership was only 4,600-5,400 riders/day. Whether the mistake was purposeful or not, a modest increase in bus service can easily support that many riders per day. There is no financial justification for any TRIMET Light Rail extension to Vancouver, for which IBR's bridge was designed.

Unfortunately, IBR used that false estimate to financially justify a \$3.5 billion expansion of TRIMET Light Rail service from Portland to Vancouver, and then started designing a massive bridge to include light rail. It's especially troubling to realize that the IBR proceeded to spend \$273-\$280 million on a bridge design tailored for something that was never financially viable. IBR is now left with a massive bridge design that's too expensive, which is now the main contributor to IBR's pending demise. If WSP generated that false estimate, then the Bi-State Committee should have a serious talk with WSP. It's no longer necessary to build a massive bridge, when a shorter and far less expensive bridge or Immersed Tube Tunnel (ITT) is now required. The IBR is building the wrong bridge!

5. The IBR stated that replacing the Interstate Bridge with a new 8-lane (4-northbound & 4-southbound) bridge will solve traffic congestion at the crossing. That statement is false.

Fact: In November 2024, IBR's Greg Johnson admitted that the new IBR bridge will not solve traffic congestion at the crossing. Just upstream from the Interstate Bridge is the I-205 Glenn Jackson bridge. It has the same 8-lane configuration as IBR's bridge and it experiences heavy traffic congestion daily. [Rep John Ley points out in a Clark County Today article](#), that Portland has a dozen bridges over the Willamette River; we need more than two bridges over the Columbia River.

6. Before his departure, IBR's Greg Johnson repeatedly said that the IBR was being fully transparent with financial & design information. However, numerous organizations and media outlets have criticized the IBR for its lack of transparency. It routinely withheld design details, public survey results, and financial information from the public.

Fact: After \$273-\$280 million spent on project planning, design, and environmental reviews, the IBR has still not released sufficient elevation/side view bridge drawings, renderings, or plans & dimensions to the public. The IBR did provide a [computer generated flyover view of their project](#) in 2024 that shows a "top view" of the bridge. What it has kept from the public are sufficient side views to allow property owners to know what the bridge will look like from ground level in their neighborhoods. Views will be blocked by what will become a large graffiti and homeless camping magnet. In February of 2025, our organization filed a Public Information Request #R008843-021425 for side views of IBR's bridge in Vancouver & Hayden Island neighborhoods. WSDOT denied our request.

7. In recent years, the IBR conducted several public survey comment periods. While the IBR promised to publicly release the results of each of those surveys, it has not.

Fact: The IBR failed to publicly release the results of multiple public comment surveys including the June 2025 survey mandated by the [National Historic Preservation Act \(NHPA\)](#) regarding the impact on historic structures such as the historic Interstate Bridge, and an April 2025 survey mandated by the [National Marine Fishery Service \(NMFS\)](#). The NMFS survey was related to IBR plans to install and remove 1,560 steel pipe piles and 1,500 linear feet of steel sheet piles over a five-year period, which required extensive underwater vibration drilling that is hazardous to marine life & habitat. The IBR continues to remain silent about those public surveys.

8. While the US Coast Guard has now signed a new Preliminary Navigation Clearance Determination that does allow for a bridge with 116 feet of vertical navigation clearance, it previously rejected each of IBR's three bridge designs as they provide insufficient navigational clearance for tall commercial vessels currently operating on the Columbia. IBR's designs provide only 116 ft of vertical clearance instead of the 178 ft currently provided by the I-5 drawbridge...IBR's bridge offers 62ft less clearance.

Fact: [The US Coast Guard rejected IBR's 116 ft of navigational clearance.](#) It needs the full 178 ft of navigational clearance for their [USS Yaquina service vessel](#), which is routinely used for dredging operations. The USS Yaquina requires 115 ft of vertical clearance...just 1 ft below IBR's 116 ft max navigational clearance. Since the Columbia River rises & falls by about 30 ft at the crossing as water is released from the Bonneville Dam, the USS Yaquina will not be able to pass under IBR's bridge when the river levels are high. IBR's 62 ft less clearance height will also force commercial marine operators to

retrofit their crafts at great expense. When mass transit [Architect Kevin Peterson offered two navigational alternatives](#) to retain the existing 178 ft vertical clearance, the IBR rejected both.

The IBR should have listened to Transit Architect Kevin Peterson petersondesign@centurytel.net and immersed tube tunnel (ITT) Civil Engineer Bob Ortblad r.ortblad@comcast.net. Both volunteered repeatedly to discuss viable options with the IBR, but were rebuffed by Greg Johnson. Kevin Peterson volunteered [two alternatives for a less expensive "expressway"](#) that involves a different bridge design or a (Light Rail compatible) ITT, and a "repurposed" Interstate Bridge (also Light Rail compatible) for local traffic. Using a repurposed Interstate Bridge for local traffic eliminates the need for on/off ramps on I-5 at Hayden Island, which is a major contributor to traffic congestion now at the crossing. Eliminating those on/off ramps allows for an 8-lane (4 north & 4 south) expressway to be built from Delta Park to Vancouver.

That makes saving & repurposing the historic Interstate Bridge a valuable part of the solution to solving traffic congestion at the crossing, and both alternatives allow the full 178 ft of existing vessel navigation clearance the US Coast Guard wanted. Bob Ortblad [repeatedly recommended an ITT](#) similar to the one under construction in Vancouver Canada. Since ITTs use interconnected modules, additional modules can be added later for additional traffic lanes or a future Light Rail expansion.

It's time to demand truth from the IBR, Mayor McEnerny-Ogle, and Governor Kotek!

- Show us any new seismic & structural study since the 2006 CRC seismic study that justifies IBR's claims that the existing Interstate Bridge cannot be retrofitted/upgraded to meet seismic standards, and needs to be replaced.
- Explain what happened to the \$1 Million grant from the Federal Highway Administration for a more current study of the bridge's seismic and geotechnical conditions. Was there ever a new seismic study?
- Explain why taxpayers should support the extreme cost of \$13-\$17 billion which will impose extreme tolls at the crossing and a tremendous tax burden on all OR & WA residents.
- Why was the [Immersed Tube Tunnel \(ITT\)](#) option rejected? It would've solved traffic congestion at the crossing, repurposed the historic Interstate Bridge for local traffic, and saved the project \$ billions.
- Why didn't the IBR consider a 3rd bridge from Portland Rd in St. Johns to Vancouver, accessible by residents of Hayden Island? A 3rd bridge across the Columbia is clearly needed to relieve traffic on I-5, and as an additional evacuation route should an earthquake impact the [Critical Energy Infrastructure \(CEI\) Hub](#).
- Explain why a \$3.5 billion expansion of Light Rail to Vancouver is still being considered when it's not financially justified by only 4,600-5,400 riders daily, which can easily be supported by adding a few extra buses?
- The IBR must immediately release conceptual drawings, renderings, and plans with elevation/side views & dimensions of each of its bridge designs.
- The IBR must also immediately release results of all public comment surveys it requested, including those mandated by NHPA and NMFS.
- The IBR must explain why they are insisting on designing a bridge with 62ft less navigational vertical clearance than the Interstate Bridge, that will prevent the [USS Yaquina dredging vessel](#) and Columbia's fleet of tall commercial vessels from crossing under the bridge during high water levels.

It's well known that WSDOT & ODOT periodically experience major cost overruns with their large projects. Case in point is ODOT's Oregon City Abernathy Bridge seismic upgrade project. Its initial cost estimate was \$248 million, but is now \$565 million over budget and almost 2 years behind schedule. Its cost could reach \$1 billion. In many cases, large project cost overruns result from poor project oversight and/or letting a subcontractor take control of the project. Unfortunately, that's exactly what has happened with the IBR project.

In what turned out to be a monumental management mistake, WSDOT & ODOT first appointed Greg Johnson to manage the IBR, then allowed him to negotiate and award a \$44 million "renewable" cost-plus engineering consulting subcontract to his former employer (WSP) without competitive bidding. In failing to provide basic financial & managerial oversight, WSDOT & ODOT effectively turned the first phase of the IBR project over to WSP on a golden platter. Taxpayers will be outraged when they learn \$273-\$280 million was spent without any benefit to Oregon or Washington residents. Greg Johnson was correct about one thing, the IBR is "basically the same [CRC project]" that failed.

A full and independent financial audit & investigation of the IBR must be immediately conducted if public confidence in WSDOT & ODOT is to be restored. It's very likely that financial fraud has occurred, especially given the close personal relationship between Greg Johnson and WSP, and the lack of project oversight by WSDOT & ODOT. If financial fraud is revealed, then all those responsible need to be held accountable. As for the IBR project and its contract with WSP, both should be terminated immediately. If allowed to continue, the IBR project will result in the largest project cost overrun in the history of the Pacific Northwest.

Gary Clark, Chair
Neighbors For A Better Crossing, Inc.
(Hayden Island resident and founder of Neighbors for a better Crossing)