



## MEMORANDUM

**DATE:** April 9, 2015

**TO:** Eric Holmes, City Manager

**FROM:** Patrick Sweeney, AICP, Principal Transportation Planner, CED

**RE:** Recent studies completed regarding the I-5/Mill Plain Interchange

**CC:** Brian Carlson, Public Works Director      Ryan Lopossa, PE, Public Works  
Chad Eiken, Director CED                              Sandra Towne, Planning Manager, CED

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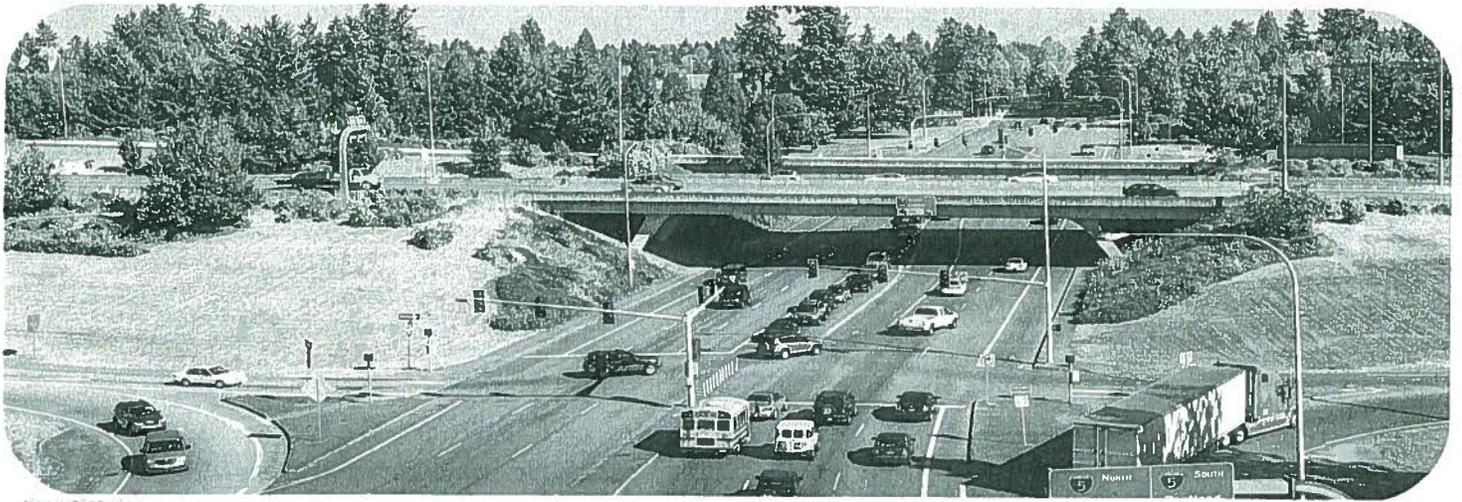
The purpose of this memo is to identify recent interstate highway planning, design and analysis work done for the I-5/Mill Plain Interchange project (see attached plan view of interchange improvement area).

The I-5/Mill Plain Interchange project has been studied extensively in concert with the Columbia River Crossing (CRC) project. The Mill Plain interchange was one of three I-5 interchanges in the state of Washington that would have been improved within the 7-mile CRC I-5 project corridor.

The CRC Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) provides full documentation of the planning, design and environmental analysis of the CRC project corridor, including the Mill Plain interchange. The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and Federal Transit Administration (FTA) were the lead federal agencies for this study. Both agencies were charged to ensure that the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process was properly conducted and completed, including the publication of the FEIS. After the NEPA process was completed, FTA and FHWA signed a Record of Decision (ROD). By signing the ROD, the FTA and FHWA affirmed that federal regulations were met.

The Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) and local governments in the Vancouver region joined together to develop the strategy for addressing the highway and regional access needs within the CRC project area, including the Mill Plain interchange. WSDOT led the preliminary highway design and environmental analysis for the CRC project in southwest Washington.

The CRC FEIS represents a significant federal and state investment in I-5 highway planning and environmental analysis that can be leveraged in the development of the final design and engineering of a stand-alone Mill Plain/I-5 interchange project. The FEIS will provide WSDOT, the City of Vancouver, and other project partners with data and analysis that support the need and justification for this critical interchange improvement project.



## Mill Plain Boulevard Interchange and Corridor Improvements Projects

April 3, 2015

Senator Curtis King, Senator Steve Hobbs, Representative Judy Clibborn and Representative Ed Orcutt:

We are writing to reaffirm our support for funding for the I-5/Mill Plain Interchange project and the Mill Plain/SR 501 corridor project and the \$80 million and \$6 million funding requests associated with these projects.

While we support other projects in our region equally, we are calling out our support for these two because of what we believe to be a number of misleading or misinformed comments being made about them. These two related projects will address existing infrastructure deficiencies that present serious barriers to freight mobility and to our efforts to enhance regional economic development in Southwest Washington. These two projects were ranked number three and four on the Regional Transportation Council (the MPO for Clark, Skamania and Klickitat Counties) Ten Year Project Prioritization report approved in January 2015. The I-5/Mill Plain interchange was built in 1968 and last improved 36 years ago in 1978. The deficiencies in the Mill Plain corridor currently make it more expensive to move freight from the Port of Vancouver to locations across the northwest. These important projects need to be funded and move forward now.

Neither of these projects is new and the need for them is regionally recognized. The need to rebuild the I-5/Mill Plain interchange has been identified as far back as 2004 by the City of Vancouver as a critical need in their citywide 2004 citywide Transportation System Plan. In recent years, the interchange improvement project was more fully developed as part of Columbia River Crossing (CRC) project. As one of the three I-5 interchange (I-5/SR 14, I-5/Mill Plain and I-5/Fourth Plain) improvement projects of CRC, the I-5/Mill Plain interchange rebuild was estimated to cost \$100 million. Now as a free standing project, our request is for only \$80 million.

These two projects are as well developed or more than all but one of the RTC identified priority regional projects. For the I-5/Mill Plain Interchange project, further savings are possible from environmental, geotechnical, and civil engineering work done during the CRC process. For the Mill Plain Corridor project, improvements will need to be coordinated with the adjacent residential neighborhoods. The Mill Plain

Corridor project will be able to leverage traffic data collection and community engagement efforts now being conducted as part of the City's *Westside Mobility Strategy* project.

The combined value of these two projects is significant both regionally and locally:

**Value to the Port of Vancouver:** The Port of Vancouver's interest stems from their ability to move oversized cargo as well as the protection of a critical freight corridor to the port. The Port has a global reputation for handling a variety of oversized cargo, including key infrastructure for wind energy projects to be delivered to eastern Washington and Oregon. The Port has been working with the City of Vancouver and WSDOT since approximately 2007 on addressing both the Mill Plain corridor and Mill Plain Interchange issues related to our ability to move this type of cargo. Specific constraints include, but are not limited to the following:

#### Mill Plain Interchange

- Mill Plain to I-5 southbound ramp is an issue for extra-long loads, primarily regarding the weave to I-5 or SR 14 as it is difficult to navigate and a safety issue
- Mill Plain to I-5 northbound ramp turn radius is too tight for left turn traveling eastbound from port to I-5
- Freight delivery hours for over-sized loads is 9:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m., which often interacts with rush hour traffic
- Capacity is an issue on Mill Plain and the interchange, particularly with additional traffic generated by infill commercial, residential and office development in Vancouver's downtown and the construction of the City's public/private Waterfront Development.

#### Mill Plain Corridor Intersections

- The intersections at Main, Broadway and C streets are sub-standard for state highways for traffic control signals and utility clearance
- Main Street has trolley tracks buried underneath the crown of the roadway creating a hump, or "bottom out" situation for long loads. The hump must be removed and the intersection needs to be re-graded.

**Value to the City of Vancouver:** The I-5/Mill Plain Interchange and Mill Plain Corridor projects are critical for access to regional employment, education and cultural facilities and will provide safety and operational improvements in the interchange area and along the Mill Plain corridor.

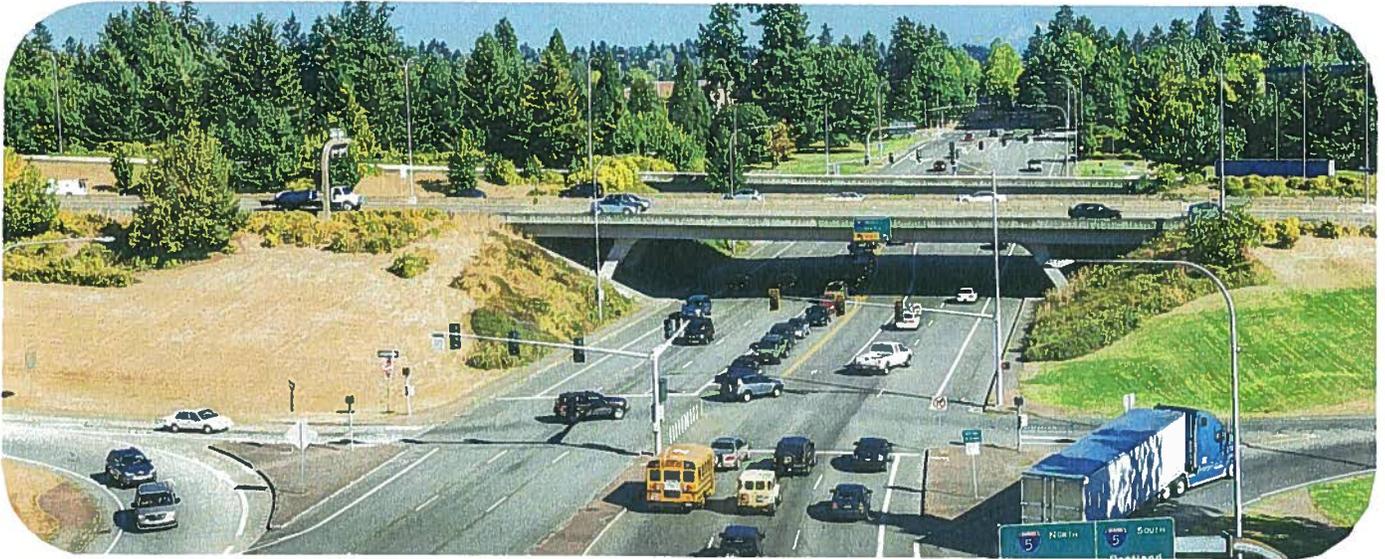
#### Regional Employment

The interchange is the primary access point to and from the downtown area from the region for jobs that exist now, not future jobs based on speculative land development:

- In 2014, the Vancouver Central City planning area supported 1,110 businesses and 14,823 employees.
- At the Port of Vancouver, 2,300 direct family-wage jobs were counted during the recession in 2010. Indirect jobs (those that support the industries at the Port) accounted for an additional 12,700 jobs.



# Mill Plain Boulevard Interchange



**Cost: \$80 Million**

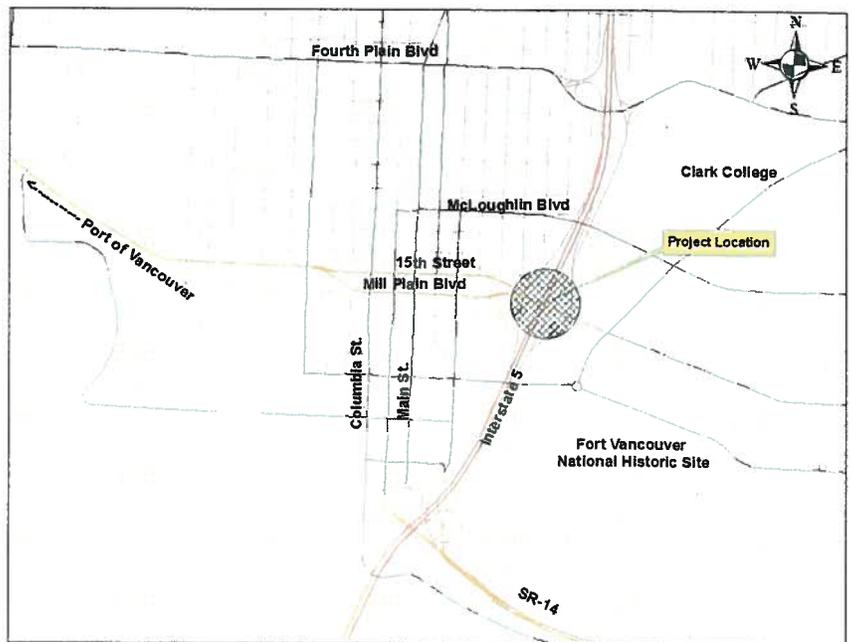
This project provides upgrades for vehicle and truck freight access through this heavily used urban freeway interchange.

Future growth within downtown Vancouver and the Port of Vancouver are projected to create failure at this interchange. In addition, the current geometric conditions are sub-standard for oversize load shipment into/out of the Port of Vancouver.

This project was identified as a priority interchange upgrade in the Columbia River Crossing (CRC) Project Package. However, in lieu of CRC Project construction, this interchange upgrade remains a critical need.

The scope of the project includes reconstruction of the existing interchange to address vehicular capacity needs, as well as geometric modifications to the on/off ramps to facilitate the movement of larger commercial vehicle traffic.

## Vicinity Map



### For More Information

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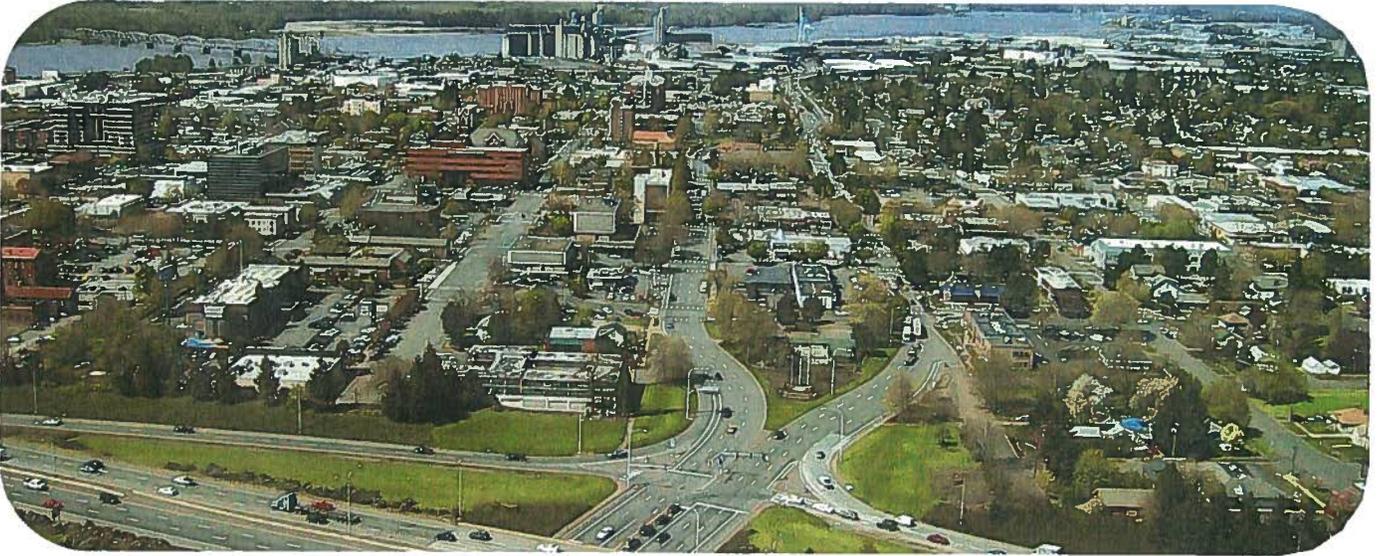
  
Port of Vancouver USA

  
CITY OF Vancouver WASHINGTON





# Port of Vancouver to Interstate 5



**Cost: \$6 Million**

This project provides operational, signal and geometric modifications to the corridor to increase freight and vehicle capacity.

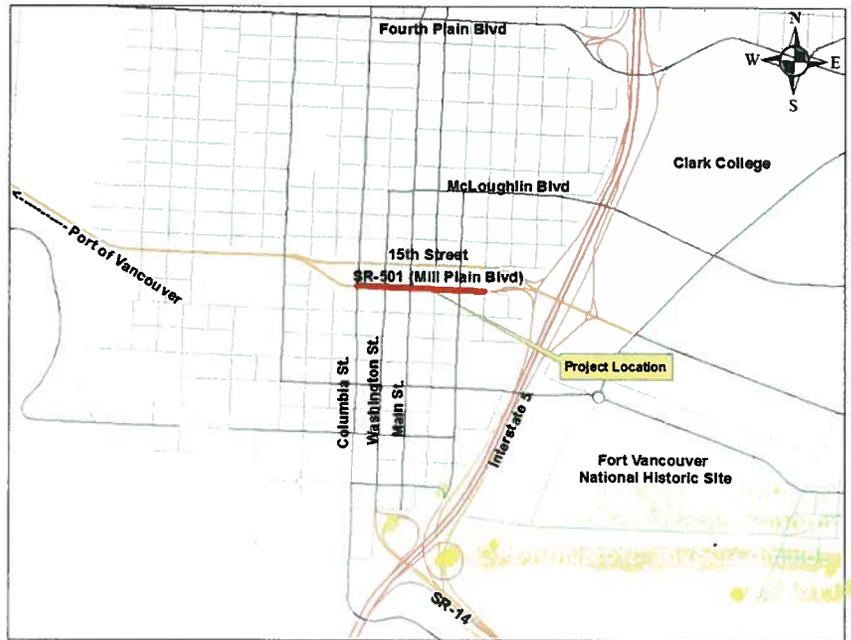
Currently, oversized loads must divert from the SR-501 corridor onto local City streets due to the geometric deficiencies of the roadway and limited overhead clearance of the existing traffic signal systems.

These upgrades will increase the capacity for growth within downtown Vancouver and the Port of Vancouver.

The scope of the project includes reconstruction of the street to remove "high points" along the roadway that can prevent the movement of freight vehicles with limited ground clearance.

In addition, each of the traffic signals along the project corridor will be reconstructed to satisfy overhead clearance requirements for commercial truck traffic. The project will also include pedestrian crosswalks, ADA and bicycle safety enhancements.

## Vicinity Map



### For More Information

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Port of Vancouver USA



We thank Senators King and Hobbs for including funding for these two projects in the Senate package and call upon the House to do the same. Thank you for your time and attention to this matter and please feel free to contact any of us if you have any questions on these two projects.

Sincerely,



Timothy D. Leavitt  
Mayor of Vancouver



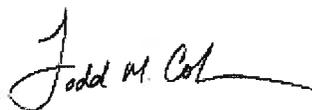
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