

Blog Entries 2013

Friday, January 4th, 2013

Looking back at 2012 and ahead to 2013

From ODOT-

As we welcome 2013, I'm thinking back on all of the progress our contractor Hamilton Construction and its subcontractors have made during the past year.

We started last January with just the new southbound bridge standing and a year later the arches for northbound bridge are almost done.

Here's a look at how far we have come.



Crews opened 2012 by drilling holes into the earth for the shafts that would support the columns for the new set of arches on the northbound bridge over the Willamette River.



Early in the year, the team started building the touch-down point for the new northbound bridge, as shown above. While workers removed most of the temporary detour bridge before 2012, they completed the task in June with the removal of the portion over Canoe Canal.



Construction of the new Canoe Canal span also began and completed in June.



This picture, taken in November from upstream, shows the arches for the new northbound bridge under construction. The final concrete pours joining the arch sections will occur this month.

Bridge construction was not the only accomplishment in 2012. Our project team also realigned nearby paths in Alton Baker Park, built a sound wall along northbound I-5, restored a stream on the south bank of the Willamette River and honored the Kalapuya Tribe with a ceremony commemorating the official bridge name, Whilamut Passage.



A new soft path now connects to a paved path in the Whilamut Natural Area.



Irrigation lines will help vegetation grow along the new sound wall.



Boulders help habitat in this newly restored stream.



Citizen volunteers join ODOT and local staff alongside the new Whilamut Passage Bridge name sign.

I'm excited to continue sharing project milestones and glimpses from behind the orange cones with you in 2013 as we complete the arches and bridge deck, open the new bridge to traffic and continue working on park restoration and design enhancements.

From the entire Willamette River Bridge Project team, here's wishing you a safe and very Happy New Year!

Posted by Jyll Smith, ODOT PIO at 1:07 PM

Thursday, January 10th, 2013

Rising water levels bring wintertime challenges

From ODOT-

Oregonians have no problem braving the winter rains that are common in the valley. For the Willamette River Bridge project, these rains bring rising river levels and seasonal challenges that our crews have to work through.

Throughout the year--but especially in winter--the construction team communicates with weather specialists for the most current forecast and tracks changing river levels through the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers website.

Up-to-date, accurate information is vital to keeping our bridge project on schedule, our work zone safe and for anticipating potential setbacks.



The heavy rains create turbulent water and standing waves on the Willamette River under the work bridge.

The higher wintertime river levels also push more debris, such as tree limbs and logs, downstream. While much of the debris passes through the work zone safely, our construction team evaluates any that collect under the bridge to determine their severity and accessibility before removing them.



Construction crews keep the boat channel clear of debris for the safety of the river users.

Our work bridge prevents construction materials from falling into the river, but as a large flat surface, it also collects rain water and runoff from the construction equipment. The team pushes this water through slotted openings in the work bridge that drain into pipes, which carry it to holding tanks. The work bridge runoff is then filtered.

Posted by Jyll Smith, ODOT PIO at 12:22 PM

Monday, January 14th, 2013

Residents and students tour the project for one-of-a-kind views

From ODOT-

As construction continues on the Whilamut Passage Bridge and surrounding areas, many people want to see the project up close. Imagine standing next to massive equipment and bridge structures in areas typically closed off from the public.

Last month nearly 30 people, including a local cycling group, took a tour and viewed the construction from the work bridge and surrounding paths. Hamilton Construction generously provides the hard hats and safety vests since this is an active construction zone and safety is a high priority.



Hamilton Construction Manager Con O'Connor leads a tour across the work bridge.



Standing on what will soon be the northbound bridge deck; ODOT Project Manager Karl Wieseke explains the next steps on the northbound bridge by noting features of the finished southbound bridge.



People learn about the [talking stones](#) along paths in the Whilamut Natural Area of Alton Baker Park.

Our team enjoys sharing the project with the community. In fact, this week alone we have three tours scheduled. One of the tours was led by our lead project designer OBEC Consulting Engineers. OBEC showed the bridge to students from Churchill High School's Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics program as part of their engineering class bridge design project.

Touring the project is the best way to fully grasp the magnitude and complexity of the Willamette River Bridge project. While tour times vary based on construction activity and safety, they'll continue throughout the project. Contact Nichole Hayward at (541) 484-7052 or nichole@cawood.com if you are interested in scheduling a tour.

Posted by Jyll Smith, ODOT PIO at 4:27 PM

Friday, January 18th, 2013

Winter Weather Challenges

From ODOT-

Weather can impact bridge construction and winter weather is no different. Similar to extreme heat, our cold and wet weather can create conditions that impact the work schedule and bring new safety challenges to the project site.

While I am always concerned with the safety of our crews, I am also concerned about the impact of winter weather and keeping the public safe while passing through the work zone. When the forecast calls for snow and ice, I turn my attention to potentially icy paths and roadways and low visibility conditions throughout the project site.

Preparation for winter begins in the fall. Signs, barrels and other devices are cleaned to improve their reflectivity and roadways are restriped. Drainage systems are cleaned in expectation of heavy rainfall. Our project's success depends on a team that is well prepared and ready to react when the conditions changes.

Whether you are driving, cycling or walking, remember to slow down when the weather conditions are less than ideal.

Posted by Karl Wieseke, ODOT Construction Project Manager at 1:43 PM

Tuesday, January 22nd, 2013

Stream Restoration Continues of south bank of Willamette River

We are excited to see that water is once again filling the stream on the south bank of the Willamette River even though its restoration will not be complete for another year.

Located between the south bank pedestrian path and the river, the stream restoration enhances habitat for fish and other wildlife while it filters and improves the quality of surface water runoff into the river.



After crews cleared the area of brush and other non-native vegetation, the stream has become more visible.



Our team will remove the old culvert pipes and plant native vegetation to safeguard the banks from erosion and enrich the habitat.

In addition to clearing the once-overgrown channel, workers placed large boulders along the streambed and banks that protect the new drainage and create a more natural habitat for fish and other stream life.

After removing the work bridge, crews will restore and reshape the remainder of the streambed that has been hidden in buried culverts west of the new bridges. Stream restoration will be complete after we finish building the new multi-use path viaduct in the same area.

While this is a long-term restoration project, we are happy to see the early signs of recovery.

This is a great example of ODOT's pledge to leave the park landscape within our work zone in better shape after construction than before our work began.

Posted by Frannie Brindleat 9:49 AM

Friday, January 25th, 2013

Behind the orange cones: Managing a massive project

From ODOT-

Our latest features interviews with project leaders who are building the state's largest bridge replacement, which will carry Interstate 5 traffic over the Willamette River for the next 100 years.

We'll talk to our construction contractors and ODOT project manager, whose work depends on strong relationships with employees, suppliers, subcontractors, governments and the public. For this video we enjoyed talking with them about how they got here, what motivates them and the most challenging and rewarding aspects of their job.

We've worked with ODOT and Hamilton Construction managers extensively throughout the project and they've been unfailingly helpful when answering questions and engaging the

community. This complex project is a lot to take on and they handle it with grace and a little wry humor.

Posted by Suzanneat3:08 PM

Friday, February 1st, 2013

Northbound Interstate 5 bridge deck takes shape

From ODOT-

In mid-October, we told you about the [first concrete deck pour](#) on the new northbound bridge. Now the team is focused on the southern end. They're preparing to build the deck and roadway above the arches that span the Willamette River.

Recently, crews poured concrete to create the box girders that support the bridge deck over Franklin Boulevard at the south bank of the river.



Knife River Corporation pumps concrete from trucks parked on Franklin Boulevard all the way up through a long hose to the top of the bridge.

Box girders are reinforced with steel rebar framework and create hollow, concrete boxes. The project team pours and levels the concrete for the box bottom, then moistens and covers the concrete, so it cures properly. Next crews install additional formwork and pour concrete for the box sides.



Before crews pour the decks, you can see box beams' rebar skeleton.

After the box girders are cured and strong enough to carry weight, crews will form and pour a 9-inch thick roadway deck using a highly efficient machine called the Bid-Well. We'll tell you more about this technique in an upcoming post.

The deck will cure for approximately two weeks before it reaches full strength. Then crews will stretch internal cables, a process called post-tensioning, to strengthen the bridge. The deck pour is scheduled for early April.

Posted by Suzanne at 4:03 PM

Thursday, February 7th, 2013

Willamette River millrace: a window into the past

From ODOT-

On the Willamette River Bridge project, clusters of eroding concrete and moss-covered walls are all that remain of a once-definitive structure for the city of Eugene: the millrace.

The Eugene millrace was built in 1851 to power a single sawmill. Over the next 30 years, more than a dozen additional mills and factories sprang up along millrace, harnessing hydropower for their operations.

From a population of 861 in 1870, Eugene reached 9,009 inhabitants by 1910. While many factors contributed to population growth, the millrace was one of the primary catalysts because it supplied cheap power to factories processing the abundant crops and timber found in the area.



This photo shows the area at the millrace intake, circa 1910. Courtesy of the Lane County Historical Society.

The millrace provided the city's commercial interests with hydropower for more than 70 years. But as water-powered industries turned to more reliable electric power, development along the millrace declined until the last water-powered industrial user closed in 1928.

More than eighty years later you can still find several of the old concrete ruins along the south bank of the river, both under the freeway bridges and to the east.

As a historical artifact, the Eugene millrace is distinguished by the continued existence of a diversion dam and intake. While they are no longer functional, these remnants help elevate the millrace to the status of "industrial archeological site" on the National Register of Historical Places.

We will make sure this important legacy lives on by installing interpretive signs and displays about the millrace along the south bank path by 2014 to make these historically significant ruins more obvious and understandable to future generations.

It's just one of the many ways ODOT is fulfilling its pledge to leave the project area in better shape after construction than we found it.

Posted by Suzanne at 4:40 PM

Monday, February 11th, 2013

The revealing of the arches

From ODOT-

If you've passed by the project lately, you may have noticed crews removing a lot of steel and wood falsework from the bridge structures. With box girders south of Franklin Boulevard complete the arches are now able to stand on their own. As the materials are removed, the striking northbound bridge is becoming more and more visible.



Crews are dismantling falsework for the arches, revealing their grace.

Constructing falsework requires attention to detail, and removing it is no different. While being careful of other workers on the site below, crews work overhead to disassemble and lower the materials to the ground before moving them to storage areas.



Crews use hydraulic rams and long, steel rods to lower box girder falsework.

The contractor preserves as much of the falsework material as possible, storing it so that it can be reused or repurposed for future projects. The material in these pictures was used on the southbound Whilmut Passage Bridge and will be reused many times before it's disposed of or recycled.

During the next month crews will continue to remove the falsework. When this stage is complete, crews will move to the next phase of pouring bridge supports: pouring the box girders that will close the span over Franklin Boulevard, reaching to the southernmost arch.

Posted by Jyll Smith, ODOT PIO

Tuesday, February 12th, 2013

For your winter reading -- our latest newsletter is now available

From ODOT-

We've just published the first [Willamette River Bridge Project](#) newsletter of 2013.

This new edition includes a letter from project manager Karl Wieseke, thanking the partners we work with who have made this project such a success.

You'll see exclusive photos of crews working high atop the bridge arches. Also, read about the many project tours we've held lately and how you can take a tour as well.

Finally, we've included tips for park users on how to stay safe around the project during the dark and wet days of winter.

Our project newsletter is distributed electronically. To get a copy sent directly to your inbox, please email Nichole Hayward at Nichole@cawood.com.

If you have a question about the project, a suggestion for a future newsletter article or a photo of the construction work you'd like to share with us, please contact me at Jyll.E.Smith@odot.state.or.us.

Thank you and enjoy!

Posted by Jyll Smith, ODOT PIO at 3:36 PM

Wednesday, February 20th, 2013

Franklin Boulevard lane closure extended

From ODOT-

This past summer, ODOT contractors closed two lanes on Franklin Boulevard under Interstate 5 to accommodate bridge construction overhead. As a result, there is just one lane of traffic on Franklin Boulevard in each direction through the construction zone.

Because we know the closure has been inconvenient for drivers, crews had hoped to return this important east-west route to its original configuration this month; however, crews still have some work to complete. We expect that this work will be complete and we'll be able to reopen the lanes in June.



The construction team holds a large concrete placement bucket in position while pouring beam closures on the north side of Franklin Boulevard while the lane is closed.

While we want to return Franklin Boulevard to its normal state as soon as possible, our first priority is public safety.

The lane restrictions are allowing contractors to safely build structural elements of the new northbound Whilamut Passage Bridge over Franklin Boulevard. Crews have also built sections of the multi-use path viaduct and added seismic protection to it. While the river level was low last week, the block retaining wall for the path was completed.

Posted by Jyll Smith, ODOT PIO at 2:02 PM

Thursday, February 21st, 2013

Community presentations keep us connected with our neighbors

From ODOT-

As a member of the Eugene-Springfield community and ODOT's Willamette River Bridge Project manager, I appreciate when our neighbors express interest, ask questions and want to learn more about the new Interstate 5 crossing.

Recently, Jeff Firth, a project manager with Hamilton Construction, presented with me to the Springfield Rotary Club. We were happy to share our insights on the project.

Later that day Jeff and I, along with Larry Fox, president of OBEC Consulting Engineers, presented at the City of Eugene Public Works All Division Workshop. The city's Transportation Planning Engineer Chris Henry, who is a member of the I-5 Willamette River Bridge Project Development Team and the Design Enhancement Steering Committee, invited us to be their keynote speakers.

In addition to sharing project information with this group of planners and engineers, I presented Chris with ODOT's Certificate of Appreciation. Chris is a valued partner in our collaborative efforts and deserves recognition for his hard work and dedication.



ODOT Project Manager Karl Wieseke (left) presents the agency's Certificate of Appreciation to Transportation Planning Engineer Chris Henry for his outstanding partnership on the I-5 Willamette River Bridge Project.

I look forward to sharing our complex project at more presentations next month to the Emerald Empire Kiwanis Club and the Washington Chapter of the American Public Works Association.

If your group would like to hear more about the bridge project from our design and construction team, please contact Nichole Hayward at Nichole@cawood.com or call (541) 484-7052.

Posted by Karl Wieseke, ODOT Construction Project Manager at 12:32 PM

Monday, February 25th, 2013

Park Improvements Continue

From ODOT-

Park improvements continue

While replacing the Interstate 5 Bridge over the Willamette River, it has been impossible to avoid impacting the parkland that surrounds it. That's why we made agreements with the cities of Eugene and Springfield to restore the land to a better condition than it was before the first shovel broke ground.

This is a great time of year for planting and making some of those park improvements.

Our project team continues to plant native vegetation and improve the natural areas that surround the new I-5 Whilamut Passage Bridge. If you have passed through the Whilamut Natural Area of Alton Baker Park, you've probably noticed new improvements popping up, including landscaping and fencing. If you haven't been through the park lately, here's a peek at what's happening.



Grass seed matures on both sides of the new right of way fence installed on the east side of the new northbound I-5 bridge.



Wooden fencing protects newly planted native vegetation east of the Canoe Canal.



Earth in front of the sound wall on the northeast side of I-5 is for planting.

While there is a lot of landscaping and planting yet to come, it's exciting to see young, native vegetation in the ground. Planting them early in the year allows the roots to establish in the ground and stay moist from winter rains.



Crews planted a variety of native bare-root shrubs, tree species and container plants near the Canoe Canal; these will continue to show up around the project.

Posted by [Frannie Brindle](#) at 4:46 PM

Thursday, February 28th, 2013

Just how much material do we recycle?

From ODOT-

We've shared with you in the past about how we [reuse and recycle](#) material from the Willamette River Bridge Project. Well now the numbers are in to illustrate just how much materials we've kept out of landfills.

Hamilton Construction and their subcontractors repeatedly reuse wood, metal and concrete before taking it off site. They meticulously track the quantities; here is a summary of the numbers that we just received for 2012.

A great example of reuse, crews reduce concrete to rubble so that it can be recycled and reused. They formed hard paths in Whilamut Natural Area with 58 cubic yards of recycled aggregate containing this rubble. The team also reprocessed an additional 154 tons back in to the Willamette River Bridge Project. On this project, we recycled over 32 tons at Eugene Sand and Gravel and Sanipac's Eco-Sort, plus Staton Companies reused another 1,720 cubic yards.

Crews recycled over 280 tons of reinforcement steel and other metals this past year. That's over 560,000 pounds in just one year. They took most of the material to Pacific Recycling and Schnitzer Steel.

From the falsework used to support the bridge work, over 8,000 pounds of untreated wood were recycled at Lane Forest Products and the Sanipac Wood Recycling facility.



The steel supports and wooden falsework are still intact here.

Our contractors work hard to preserve construction materials, avoiding waste, increasing efficiency and lowering costs. My thanks to our team!

Posted by Jyll Smith, ODOT PIO at 11:15 AM

Monday, March 4th, 2013

Complexities behind the retaining wall

From ODOT-

I recently mentioned that crews completed a block retaining wall on the east end of the multi-use viaduct path. You might be surprised at how such a big, bulky structure requires delicate planning.

Our crews built a 67-foot long wall out of six tiers of precast concrete blocks. The blocks create and stabilize the transition from the edge of the south bank to the path. Retaining walls hold back tons of soil where there is a change in elevation. They displace the pressure of the soil that is naturally caused by loose soil.

As with most structural and load-bearing elements, many crucial factors aren't visible to the common eye. When the team designed the wall, engineers addressed different soil properties, material settlement concerns and landslide resistance factors. Complying with the careful design, contractors installed a drainage pipe and used a permeable fabric to mitigate water pressure.

Construction of this retaining wall shows how attention to detail is crucial.



K & E Excavators shovel base rock to ensure the base is level.

Posted by Jyll Smith, ODOT PIO at 3:49 PM

Thursday, March 7th, 2013

Making a transition from roadway to bridge

From ODOT-

Have you ever noticed that little bump as you start over the new southbound Whilamut Passage Bridge? It's caused by an impact panel and is intentional and vital to our bridge design.

The construction team completed building the last impact panel on the project this week, for the new northbound bridge. The impact panel is a slab of concrete, about 20 feet wide, that serves as the transition from the roadway onto the bridge structure. The point where the panel meets the bridge is designed to expand or contract in response to temperature, vibration or seismic activity with the use of an expansion joint that allows carefully controlled movement.

Last week, crews formed the steel reinforcement and poured the cast-in-place slab of concrete which, combined with the expansion joint, make up the impact panel.



Crews use the Bid-Well machine to spread and level the new concrete for the impact panel.

This week, workers will install railing and barriers alongside this section of the roadway. The team will cover the concrete impact panel with black asphalt paving this spring when the roadway and deck are finished.

Posted by Jyll Smith, ODOT PIO at 1:52 PM

Monday, March 11th, 2013

The essential equipment of construction, Part 1

From ODOT-

I thought you might enjoy a close-up look of some large machinery that we're using to build the Whilamut Passage Bridge. This is the first of a two-part series of this impressive equipment.



The sharp teeth of a roto-mill grinder shred asphalt for quick, easy removal. The old asphalt is then reclaimed to create new pavement.



Equipment and ingenuity come together as workers operate hydraulic ram jacks to lower falsework used to build the box girders supporting the bridge. The ram jacks slowly lower steel rods attached to the falsework below the bridge. Once on the ground, the falsework forms are disassembled and reused on other projects.



Many people call this giant a steamroller, but our contractors call it an asphalt compactor. It ensures a smooth finish to the roadway.

Posted by Jyll Smith, ODOT PIO at 11:47 AM

Wednesday, March 13th, 2013

The essential equipment of construction, Part 2

From ODOT-

Here is the second in a series on the large machinery that we're using to build the Whilamut Passage Bridge.



For the roadway portions of our project, this large paver pushes and forms the continuously reinforced concrete pavement, creating a 12-foot-wide roadway. Crews follow behind to ‘float’ a final hand finish that ensures a smooth, quiet ride.

On the bridge spans, crews use an efficient Bid-Well paving machine that spreads, levels and flattens concrete poured for the final bridge deck. Spanning an entire 12-foot roadway lane, it steadily moves on metal rails, forming fresh concrete into finished pavement.*



Here’s how the paving machine works. The auger to the right of the center roller spreads the concrete, the black wheel levels it, and the roller flattens the concrete to make the bridge deck consistent and strong.

*Text revised on April 4, 2013.

Posted by Jyll Smith, ODOT PIO at 10:17 AM

Tuesday, March 19th, 2013

Multi-use path viaduct takes shape

From ODOT

There has been a lot of work happening on the multi-use path viaduct east of the Whilamut Passage Bridge since my [last update](#).

Here's a closer look at what we've been doing to build the multi-use path viaduct this winter.



Crews placed large concrete box beams for the new path viaduct between the Willamette River and Franklin Boulevard to the right. The beams are salvaged from the temporary Interstate 5 bridge built in 2004. Each beam is about 100 feet long.



Next, workers added a temporary wooden safety railing to protect crews during construction. They will install a permanent railing later next year.



To stabilize the transition from the edge of the river's south bank to the viaduct, our team built a 67-foot long concrete block retaining wall at the east end of the path.



Here's a view of the path viaduct from the Willamette River looking south toward Franklin Boulevard. By fall of 2014 the new path connecting Springfield to Alton Baker Park will be paved and ready for pedestrians, runners and cyclists.

Posted by Karl Wieseke, ODOT Construction Project Manager at 10:58 AM

Wednesday, March 20th, 2013

Beneath the roadway

From ODOT-

Here's something you don't see every day. You're looking at the horizontal beams that will support the concrete bridge deck motorists will drive on across the I-5 Whilamut Passage Bridge.



Freshly poured T-beams are located on the left and far right of this picture. Precast floor beams are in the middle.
Posted by Jyll Smith, ODOT PIO at 1:32 PM

Monday, March 25th, 2013

Alongside Franklin Boulevard

From ODOT-

As you drive along Franklin Boulevard east of the I-5 bridge project, you may see crews building a multi-use path viaduct to connect cycling and walking paths in Alton Baker Park to Springfield.

Workers recently built the curbs and finished the bents, or vertical supports, of the viaduct.

The viaduct and path improvements are part of ODOT's commitment to leave the parkland near the I-5 bridge project in better shape than before construction began.



The path viaduct is taking shape along Franklin Boulevard. At right, a worker finishes the surface of a bent with grout to make sure it is smooth.

Posted by Jyll Smith, ODOT PIO at 2:30 PM

Friday, March 29th, 2013

U of O journalism student takes a site tour to inform story

From ODOT-

We love to see coverage of the Interstate 5 Willamette River Bridge Project on other community blogs.

That's why we're excited about University of Oregon student Alan Sylvestre's recent post that includes the bridge project. He wrote the piece for a class at the School of Journalism and posted it on the Reporting 1 Blog.

In his report, Alan writes about how cyclists, commuters and businesses in Glenwood deal with construction. He reached out to Karl Wieseke, ODOT project manager, for his perspective on working with the local community.

Also included is a wonderful video featuring the project area and construction activities.

We were happy to read student Allison Camp's perspective about the project. "It's not that big of an inconvenience,' Camp says. 'The consideration for commuters in planning is good and the bike paths will be beautiful by all means.' As the progress continues on the bridge and surrounding areas, Camp and other community members stay optimistic about the long-term impact of the project for the Glenwood community."

Thank you to Alan for highlighting the ties our project has with the surrounding communities.

Alan Sylvestre's full story is available [here](#). You can read more stories by U of O journalism students at the Reporting 1 Blog page.

Posted by Jyll Smith, ODOT PIO at 1:35 PM

Tuesday, April 2nd, 2013

Churchill High School Technology Majors Tour Whilamut Passage Bridge

The I-5 Willamette River Bridge project team hosted some special visitors at the construction site earlier this year: students in Churchill High School's science, technology, engineering and mathematics program — STEM for short. As a scientist myself, I'm especially delighted to see young men and women show an interest in these areas – and to be supported in that interest.

Staff from OBEC Consulting Engineers, designer of the new Whilamut Passage Bridge, described the important architectural and engineering details of the arch-deck bridge and led the STEM class on a tour of the construction work.

It was a great day for viewing lots of on-site activities. Work was under way on two phases of box girder construction right next to some completed box girder spans.



Above, OBEC engineer Brad Larsen (right) shows students how the large paving machine behind them built the concrete deck for the new northbound bridge.



Standing on the vast work bridge just above water level, students listened as Larsen explained the design of the bridge arches and how they support the top deck and roadway.



The students learned how the bridge arches and spandrel columns were formed and poured in place to support the roadway deck.

The STEM program teachers agreed that their students really enjoyed seeing firsthand and up close how a large, complex construction project is designed and built.

Larsen plans to stay in touch with the STEM class and even offer them internships with OBEC throughout the year.

Maybe someday one of the STEM students will design bridges for ODOT, too.

Posted by Frannie Brindle at 10:01 AM

Thursday, April 4th, 2013

A seat with a view

From ODOT-

In another step to improve surrounding parkland, our construction team recently placed a log bench along the new multi-use path. The bench allows people to sit and enjoy the natural surroundings and park activities. Landscapers have added topsoil, are still seeding the area, and will continue planting native vegetation later this spring.

I'm looking forward to sitting on the bench and enjoying the springtime sights and sounds. I hope you take time to enjoy the new addition as well.



The new log bench sits on rain-drenched land overlooking orange fencing that protects nearby wetlands. When the project is complete this area will look much better.

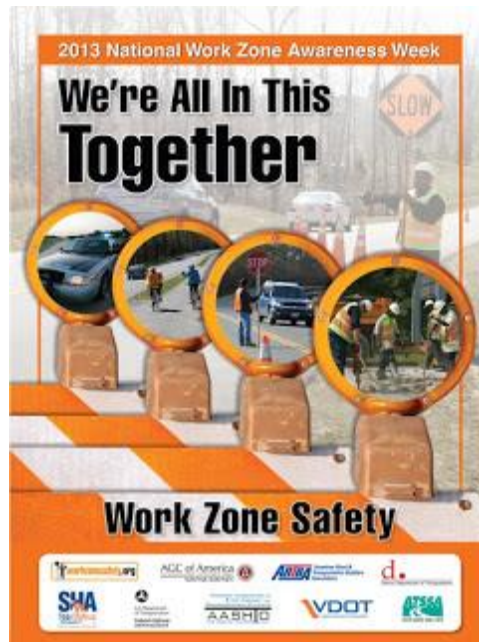
Posted by Jyll Smith, ODOT PIO at 9:38 AM

Thursday, April 11th, 2013

A note about driver safety in the work zone

From ODOT-

The U.S. Department of Transportation is highlighting the importance of construction zone safety as work increases throughout the nation this spring. It has declared April 15-19 National Work Zone Awareness Week. On its [Fast Lane](#) blog, USDOT tells us that "80-85 percent of victims in work zone fatal crashes are vehicle occupants or drivers," emphasizing that "We're All In This Together" when traveling through work zones.



Each May, ODOT celebrates Transportation Safety Awareness Month in Oregon by increasing our messages to the community about staying safe when driving in work zones and protecting roadside workers through our “Respect The Zone” program. We also provide tips for drivers to help them arrive at their destinations without incident.

For the I-5 Willamette River Bridge Project, we are fortunate in that we have few impacts to traffic on the interstate, but please be aware that the freeway lanes narrow in our work zone and crews and equipment working off to the side can be a distraction.

Lane restrictions on Franklin Boulevard will continue through the spring. Please always obey reduced speed limits and flagger directions as you pass through our work zone.

Posted by Jyll Smith, ODOT PIO at 11:01 AM

Wednesday, April 17th, 2013

Local news station captures major project milestone

From ODOT-

Earlier this month, KEZI 9 News aired a great story about our reaching a new construction milestone on the Willamette River Bridge project. Contractors successfully completed the pour over Franklin Boulevard. With careful timing and close attention to the weather forecast, crews finished the concrete pour just before the rain started.

KEZI 9 News was on hand to capture the action and learn more about this major milestone. I enjoyed talking with the news crew and took them to the top of the bridge to get a closer look at the work.

You can see the work in action by watching KEZI's coverage below and the written [story](#).

Many thanks to KEZI 9 News for its interest in the project!



April 3 footage of the bridge pour, courtesy of KEZI 9 News.

Posted by Karl Wieseke, ODOT Construction Project Manager at 11:56 AM

Thursday, April 18th, 2013

Deck pour over Franklin Boulevard

From ODOT-

Compared to the graceful arches that span the Willamette River, the concrete bridge deck may seem straightforward and simple, yet it is much more than a flat slab of concrete. Here's a description of how contractors poured the southern section of the Whilamut Passage Bridge deck that stretches over Franklin Boulevard last week.

After completing construction of the [box girders](#) that support the deck, crews added wooden

falsework to maintain the hollow box structure. Then they installed steel reinforcements on top of the box girders before pouring the concrete.



Manske Construction Corporation created two layers of gridded rebar that are carefully spaced for added strength.



The ironworkers used different sizes of steel rebar, set at a variety of angles, to reinforce different sections of the deck. Notice the large rebar used for a joint located above a bridge column.

Once the rebar was installed, spaced and tied together, contractor Knife River pumped concrete to the bridge deck from trucks parked on Franklin Boulevard. A specially trained operator used a [Bid-Well](#) machine to distribute, flatten and smooth the concrete.



The Bid-Well follows right behind the freshly pumped concrete. Crews moisten the material before it's distributed to allow for a wet cure.

After the fresh concrete cures for 14 days, crews will [post-tension](#) the new bridge deck and let the concrete cure for another 120 days to allow for natural shrinkage and greater strength.

Posted by Jyll Smith, ODOT PIO at 11:28 AM

Tuesday, April 23rd, 2013

Park Path Safety Reminder

From ODOT-

With the promise of drier weather and sunny days ahead, we expect more people on the bicycle and pedestrian paths throughout the construction area and in Alton Baker Park.

It's always nice to see people buzzing around as the weather improves, but the project safety team wants to remind you to be aware of construction activity and other path users.



For safe traveling through the work zone, we encourage cyclists, runners and walkers to:

- Watch out for increased path traffic.
- Watch for cross traffic at path and roadway intersections.
- Slow down when cycling through the work zone.
- Obey flagger instructions and guidance.
- Wear high-visibility clothing.



Path users should expect brief delays on the south bank of the river in late May and early June* while crews remove the remaining wood and metal falsework over the path that connects the Knickerbocker Bridge to Franklin Boulevard. Flaggers will guide you through the work area safely.

*The delays are now expected the week of May 6 rather than late May and early June.
Posted by Frannie Brindleat 1:05 PM

Monday, April 29th, 2013

See what's going on high atop the arches of the new northbound bridge *From ODOT-*

It's hard to spot some of the current work being done high atop the graceful new arches of the northbound Whilamut Passage Bridge, far above the river.

But if you look carefully, you may spot crews building the deck on top of arches. In this photo you can see them installing plywood to provide shaping and hold to concrete as it dries in place.



In the background you can see the yellow [Bid-Well](#) paving another section of the deck.

Notice that in addition to wearing hardhats, eye protection and brightly colored shirts, crew members also have cables tied to their harnesses. Safety is a top priority at the project site, and the cables will catch a worker should he or she slip and fall while working at such a great height.

Posted by Jyll Smith, ODOT PIO at 2:44 PM

Monday, May 6th, 2013

Holes in the bridge

From ODOT-

Did you know that there are holes on the underside of the Whilamut Passage Bridge?

Specifically, there are access holes that allow ODOT workers to get inside of the hollow bridge beams for inspections and maintenance.

Every two years, ODOT inspects its bridges and on large spans special access holes allow workers to inspect the interior of bridge beams and decks and make any necessary repairs. Each span of the new Whilamut Passage Bridge has its own access holes, which measure 24 inches by 36 inches. If you look up when standing under the bridge, you can tell how many beams support each span by counting the access holes.

The inspectors receive special training to ensure they won't get claustrophobic while working in such an enclosed, dark space. Security doors are installed inside the access holes and locked in between inspections and repairs.



Workers get ready to enter one of the access holes to finish the interior surfaces of the bridge's concrete beams and decks.



Here you can see part of the rebar skeleton that makes up the bridge beams. The arrows point to plugs that create the oval access holes when concrete is poured for the beams.

Posted by Jyll Smith, ODOT PIO at 2:49 PM

Tuesday, May 14th, 2013

Hamilton shares gift of safety with community

From ODOT-

Hamilton Construction, the primary construction contractor for the I-5 Willamette River Bridge Project, reached yet another milestone in safety and in traditional fashion, gave back to the community.

The Springfield-based company recently logged in more than 100,000 hours of work without an injury, according to a recent article by KLCC Public Radio. To celebrate this, Hamilton donated \$10,000 to [Northwest Youth Corps](#), a youth development and outdoor education organization. They, in turn, will use the money to enhance their own safety programs.

Construction can potentially be a very dangerous job, so Hamilton makes worker safety a priority by using high quality protection equipment and gear and contracting with safety officers to make sure that it is used properly.

Keeping track of hours worked without injury is common in this industry. Hamilton has made it a tradition to donate to a non-profit organization local to the project when employees achieve safety milestones.

Posted by Suzanne at 3:55 PM

Monday, May 20th, 2013

Bats get custom-built homes under new I-5 Whilamut Passage bridges

From ODOT-

Although horror movies might lead you to associate bats exclusively with caves, bridges—especially the concrete kind common in Oregon — also make good bat shelters. The underside of a bridge is dark and quiet, just the way daytime sleepers like it. And the concrete mass of a big bridge stores heat, so bats can regulate their mammalian body temperature by climbing up when it's cool and down when it's warm.

Although no bat species in Oregon are yet listed as threatened or endangered, bat populations are declining almost everywhere. ODOT recognizes that rebuilding bridges throughout the state gives the agency a chance to help bat populations recover.

During design of the new Whilamut Passage Bridge, we found local *Myotis* bat populations living around the bridge work zone.

Our project team designed and built eight bat boxes — each providing a quiet, safe daytime roosting place for bats — and installed them on the southbound bridges over the Willamette River and the Canoe Canal. Bat boxes on the northbound bridge have yet to be installed.

The new bat boxes will ultimately help improve bat populations, which in turn help naturally control insect populations. Bats love to eat mosquitoes and other pesky critters.



The photos above show bat boxes installed on the Canoe Canal (top) and Whilamut Passage bridges (bottom). If you look carefully, you can see narrow openings on the bottom and side of the box that allow bats in and out of their new home.



A bat roosts by clinging to a rough-textured bridge beam. Photo courtesy of Diane Winterboer, APHIS USDA Wildlife Services.

Posted by Suzanneat9:48 AM

Wednesday, May 22nd, 2013

15th Talking Stone to be placed on June 8

From ODOT-

By: Frannie

In two weeks, the Citizen Planning Committee for the Whilamut Natural Area of Alton Baker Park will celebrate the placement of the fifteenth Kalapuya Talking Stone. Attend the special dedication ceremony at 1 p.m. on June 8, just north of the Knickerbocker Bridge.

Kalapuya Elder Esther Stutzman of the Kommema Cultural Protection Association will welcome the newest and largest stone to the Whilamut Natural Area.

What is a Talking Stone?

Before the arrival of Euro-Americans, Kalapuyans were the largest Native American group in western Oregon. The Talking Stones commemorate Kalapuya heritage and preserve some of the 140 words still known from the tribe's language.

Fourteen large Talking Stones inscribed with Kalapuya words already stand along paths in the Whilamut Natural Area. Quarried from a basalt deposit in historic Kalapuya territory, 11 Talking Stones were installed in 2003.

As part of restoration work for the I-5 Willamette River Bridge Project, ODOT is contributing four additional Talking Stones to the park. Four stones were installed — CAMAFEEMA ("ferns on the ground"), DUUCU-BA ("powerful place") and HAL-BA ("downstream").



The newest stone — GUDU-KUT ("frog") — stands on the edge of a seasonal pond used by the Pacific Tree Frog, whose chorus is an early sign of the coming of spring.

Posted by Frannie Brindleat 2:38 PM

Wednesday, May 29th, 2013

Got questions? We have answers.

From ODOT-

As ODOT's Willamette River Bridge Project manager, I often talk to local groups and provide public tours. Here is a sampling of the questions people ask.

Q: What will happen to the staging area in the Whilamut Natural Area of Alton Baker Park when construction is complete?

A: We will restore this large area to its original condition and plant 7,000 camas bulbs to reflect the Kalapuya heritage in the area.



The staging area in the Whilamut Natural Area currently holds construction equipment and materials used on the bridge replacement.

Q: What are anti-access walls?

A: They are 8-foot-tall concrete walls at the base of each arch that deter people from climbing the arches from the riverbank.



Workers pour concrete for an anti-access wall at the bottom of a bridge arch.

Q: How many expansion joints does each bridge have?

A: There are five expansion joints on each bridge to allow for movement caused by temperature changes, protecting bridge parts from damage.

Q: Does the project have webcams? If so, where are they?

A: There are three webcams on the project. Two are on the billboard near Chambers Construction and the other is between the two bridges on the north bank. Our webcams provide the public with a live look at construction activity and collect footage that we are able to turn into a time-lapse video.

Q: What happens to the wooden and steel falsework when it's no longer needed?

A: Most of the falsework is used and reused multiple times on the project before crews remove and recycle it. Aside from plywood, which has limited reuse, lumber and steel falsework components are saved and stored by the contractor for future projects.

Q: How many work hours have been logged on this project?

A: From July 2009 through December 2012, construction crews logged 279,722 hours of labor on this project.

And my favorite question from a second grader visiting the project:

Q: What is the name of the crane operator?

A: John.

I appreciate the public's curiosity about the project. It is refreshing to realize there is so much interest in every aspect of the bridge replacement work — from construction, environment and safety to our incredible team.

Posted by Karl Wieseke, ODOT Construction Project Manager at 7:18 AM

Wednesday, June 12th, 2013

Traffic in project area will return to normal this summer

From ODOT-

We're excited to announce the much-anticipated new northbound Whilamut Passage Bridge will open to traffic this summer.

Before traffic returns to normal, the construction team is finishing the bridge deck and installing permanent highway signs. They also completed roadwork on Franklin Boulevard and have returned traffic to a four-lane configuration.

Crews will also reopen the northbound freeway off-ramp to Franklin Boulevard at exit 192 this summer.

Thank you for your patience with traffic switches during bridge construction. Please continue to drive safely the next few months as the last few shifts are made to return traffic routes to normal. We're thrilled to wrap up the project and get motorists going where they need to go on the new, graceful Whilamut Passage Bridge.



Crews returned Franklin Boulevard to its original four-lane configuration this week.

Posted by Jyll Smith, ODOT PIO at 2:36 PM

Monday, June 17th, 2013

How to avoid hazards, safely boat through the bridge work zone

From ODOT-

I hope you are looking forward to summer as much as I am!

Many of you may be enjoying it on the water. Here is some advice for safely boating or floating down the river and through the construction zone of the I-5 Willamette River Bridge project.

It might look like you can pass under the work bridge in any location. However, the combination of strong currents, pilings in the river and trapped or floating debris in the work zone creates tricky hazards.

If you enter the river upstream, east of the bridge, please keep to the right bank along the north side of the river to pass through the work zone at the designated safe place. Our crews maintain this channel to keep it clear of debris and snags for safe passage under the bridge.

Look for signs on the work bridge and along the right bank channel to direct you. Boaters will also find informational signs at put-in areas upstream of the bridge.



A sign in the Willamette River (far left) directs a boater to the safe channel



A sign at the D Street boat ramp cautions boaters that they are entering a construction zone

And please, always wear a life jacket regardless of how experienced a boater or how strong a swimmer you are. River currents can be unpredictably strong and spring snowmelt makes for shockingly cold water, even on hot days.

We are committed to keeping river users safe in our project area, and with your help we can have another incident-free boating season.

Posted by Karl Wieseke, ODOT Construction Project Manager at 1:09 PM

Friday, June 21st, 2013

Hidden cables make for a strong, flexible bridge

From ODOT-

After the fresh concrete on the Whilamut Passage Bridge hardens and cures, we tension bridge beams and decks to make them stronger.

Post-tensioning involves stretching interior steel cables like a rubber band to give bridge beams and decks an inner link of strength and flexibility.

Steel cables are threaded through ducts in the bridge and stretched tight using hydraulic jacks. Workers must tighten the cables in a specific order to maintain a balance of pressure. Special wedges keep the cables from slipping while being stretched.

In the photo below, you can see:

- Numerous post-tensioning cables.
- Three ducts, or passageways, for the cables.
- Three round anchor plates that are fixed at the end of the ducts, each with smaller openings that the cables pass through.



Post-tensioning the concrete bridge beams and decks makes them stronger and more flexible than concrete alone, ensuring the bridge can easily carry heavy traffic and better resist an earthquake for decades to come.

Posted by Suzanneat10:34 AM

Monday, June 24th, 2013

Delays possible on Canoe Canal Path; watch for flaggers

From ODOT-

Thanks to favorable weather, construction is moving faster than expected. Cyclists and pedestrians may encounter minor delays on the Canoe Canal Path for the next month as crews working on the Interstate 5 Willamette River Bridge Project grade and pave the north and south embankments where I-5 crosses the Canoe Canal.

Flaggers will be on the site to let path users know if they will need to wait momentarily. In the interest of safety for both path users and construction workers, please pay attention and obey the flaggers' instructions. These intermittent delays will happen only on weekdays.

Posted by Jyll Smith, ODOT PIOat3:03 PM

Friday, June 28th, 2013

Please join us for a community celebration

From ODOT-

It's hard to believe that the new Whilamut Passage Bridge is opening in August!

We've scheduled two upcoming events to commemorate this occasion and hope you can join us:

Opening ceremony with U.S. Rep. Peter DeFazio: 10 a.m., Friday, July 26

Community celebration and bridge walk: 11 a.m. – 2 p.m., Saturday, Aug. 3
A brief ceremony will start at 11:30 a.m. Saturday.

Family friendly and fun for all ages, both events will take place in the Whilamut Natural Area of Alton Baker Park and will include brief presentations, project information and walking tours of the new northbound bridge.

Getting there:

The celebrations will be held north of the Knickerbocker Bridge in the Whilamut Natural Area of Alton Baker Park.

We encourage attendees to use alternate modes of transportation. There are nearby bus stops and many bicycle and pedestrian routes to the natural area. Senior and disabled parking will be located in Lot 9 off Leo Harris Parkway. A courtesy shuttle will transport those from the senior and disabled parking area to the event site.



Keep reading this blog to learn more about the festivities. We look forward to sharing this important day with you!

Posted by Suzanne at 11:55 AM

Wednesday, July 3rd, 2013

Students help preserve local history

From ODOT-

Recently, students from four local elementary schools have helped us preserve some local history in time capsules that will be sealed inside the new Whilamut Passage Bridge for the next 75 to 100 years.

Crews will place the time capsules inside the base of the bridge's arches later this summer, where they will remain safe and dry until they are recovered at the end of the bridge's life.

We thought a time capsule would be a great way to involve children in a major transportation project and help them learn how a bridge is built.

Hamilton project managers offered classroom visits and site tours to participating schools: Buena Vista Elementary in Eugene, Maple Elementary in Springfield, Lundy Elementary in Lowell and the Eugene Christian School.

"We wanted to provide a learning opportunity and maybe even spark interest in a career in engineering, architecture or construction," said Con O'Connor, Hamilton construction manager.

Students in the Maple Elementary Talented and Gifted program impressed the team visiting that school. One student talked about Andrew Carnegie and the first steel bridge, while another explained how steel rebar and concrete work together to provide stability.

At Lundy Elementary, sixth graders engineered and built their own model bridges. One model bridge – built from toothpicks and glue – withstood 250 pounds and will be included in Lundy's time capsule.

"We are so glad we could get children involved," said ODOT Project Manager Karl Wieseke. "Long after they grow up, they'll have a special connection to this beautiful bridge."



This toothpick bridge built by Lundy Elementary sixth graders will be one of many included in the time capsule.

Posted by Suzanneat3:13 PM

Wednesday, July 17th, 2013

Community Advisory Group helped us build a bridge with lasting legacy

From ODOT-

The soon-to-be-open Whilamut Passage Bridge is a tribute to the designers, builders, project managers, volunteer community members and officials who worked together to make it a success.

Before construction began, ODOT promised to incorporate community values and ideas into the bridge design, and to leave the project area in better shape than before construction began.

The project's Community Advisory Group has been integral to our accomplishing this goal. They have been meeting since 2007 and just held their final meeting.

Members have included representatives from local neighborhoods, recreation groups, local artists, architects, the University of Oregon and the Citizen Planning Committee for the Whilamut Natural Area of Alton Baker Park and Eastgate Woodlands. The group functions in an advisory role and provides recommendations to a multi-agency project development team, which then makes recommendations to ODOT.

The CAG participated in important decisions such as the deck-arch design of the new bridge, community involvement activities and the selection of design enhancements. Members volunteered over 1,300 hours in meetings, open houses and countless other community activities.

"The Community Advisory Group has been a valuable partner in helping ODOT address community concerns and build a project that reflects the history and culture of the area," said Karl Wieseke, ODOT project manager.

"Thanks to the work of CAG members, this \$204 million bridge replacement project has maintained strong public interest in and support for good design that complements the surrounding parks and Whilamut Natural Area. Their efforts and advocacy for excellence will have a lasting impact for decades to come," Wieseke said.

Posted by Jyll Smith, ODOT PIO at 4:32 PM

Monday, October 14th, 2013

Natural viewing area planned for south bank of Willamette River

From ODOT

The south bank of the Willamette River, just east of the Knickerbocker Bridge, is getting a facelift!

ODOT's project team, including Cameron McCarthy Landscape Architecture & Planning, worked closely with the Design Enhancement Steering Committee on the design. Native landscaping features will mingle with seating constructed of natural materials that offers a great view of the recently completed Whilamut Passage Bridge.



Cameron McCarthy Landscape Architecture & Planning created the above renderings of the landscaping that will be located between the [multi-use path](#) and the bank of the river.

Work on the south bank is scheduled to be complete next summer.

Posted by Frannie Brindleat 10:39 AM

Wednesday, October 16th, 2013

South bank multi-use path extends under Whilamut Passage Bridge

From ODOT-

In August, crews placed all of the remaining beams, which were salvaged and reused from the temporary detour bridge. The joints where the beams meet one another have been grouted, and the path is ready to be paved.

The multi-use path viaduct will run underneath the new Whilamut Passage Bridge and cross over the soon-to-be restored streambed. It will connect to the existing paved path on the south bank of the Willamette River just east of the Knickerbocker Bridge.



Here's a view from the new multi-use path looking west toward the existing bicycle and pedestrian path.



Here is near where the new multi-use path crosses over the streambed, which will be restored by next summer.

The entire path viaduct will be paved at the end of November or early next spring, depending on the weather. Crews will install permanent railing late this fall.

Be sure to watch for more changes in the area as crews continue work on the path, stream and nearby landscaping. Path users should be aware of construction traffic and equipment.

Posted by Karl Wieseke, ODOT Construction Project Manager at [11:18 AM](#)

Friday, October 25th, 2013

Views from the viaduct

From ODOT-

As crews continue to work on the path viaduct, we've been able to capture some great photos that show how close to the river runners, walkers and bicyclists will be once this new path opens next spring.



In this photo, crews are pouring concrete between the path beams to seal them together; this segment of the path passes by the base of the highway bridge arches.



Here, they perform the same task along the eastern south bank of the river.



Where the path runs along the south bank on the east side of the Whilamut Passage Bridge, the viaduct deck is being prepared for the hand railing and lighting.

Posted by Suzanne at 4:06 PM

Thursday, October 31st, 2013

Inside a median barrier

From ODOT-

Here's a rare look inside one of the median barriers that you drive by all the time.



Above you can see a row of reinforcing steel, or rebar, that will support the shape of the median barrier after crews fill the forms with concrete and provide strength for many years to come.



Here the crews are placing the concrete to complete this cast-in-place barrier at the Whilamut Passage Bridge.

Posted by Jyll Smith, ODOT PIO at 8:10 AM

Tuesday, November 5th, 2013

As blog winds down, what final topics should we cover?

From ODOT-

The Willamette River Bridge project blog began in 2010, nearly one year after construction started. To date, it's ODOT's only blog. It was launched as a pilot program, to keep the communities of Eugene and Springfield updated on the project and impacts, while providing a forum for issues and topics of interest.

By the end of this year, most bridge construction will be complete. Work will continue on the path viaduct, design enhancements and environmental restoration, but at a slower pace than before. Consequently, we plan to wrap up this blog by Dec. 31.

Between now and then, we want to hear from you. Are there any topics yet to be covered that you'd like to read about? Would you like more detail or an update on something we've previously covered? Please let us know in the comment box below.

Thank you for reading the Willamette River project blog! We genuinely appreciate your input.

Posted by Jyll Smith, ODOT PIO at 8:38 AM

Thursday, November 7th, 2013

Project manager wins prestigious award

From ODOT-

Congratulations to Karl Wieseke for winning ODOT's Excellence in Project Delivery Award in Project Management Leadership.

Karl has exercised his many talents on the Willamette River Bridge project, to widespread delight and gratitude. Here are just a few reasons he deserved this award.

Karl is a hands-on manager. His presence at the opening celebration is a classic example of his approach. He began his Saturday early by placing signs with the public involvement team, followed it up by leading a bike ride on the bridge, and then entertained the many citizens waiting in line to tour the deck by answering their questions about the project knowledgeably.

With so many invested stakeholders, Karl had many opportunities to collaborate with the communities of Eugene and Springfield, mitigating concerns by responding to issues with innovative solutions.

Karl also involved the local community in various aspects of the project. He hosted tours for several agencies, interest groups, students and engineers. He also worked very closely with tribal representatives.

The success of this project — and the fact that it is being delivered on time and under budget — would not have been possible without his dedication.

Here are some quotes from his colleagues that show why Karl deserves this award:

"In addition to being resourceful, Karl is exceptional at the human side of project management. As the face of the project, he is great at establishing an instant connection with anyone."

– Larry Fox, President, OBEC Consulting Engineers.

"Thanks to Karl, there is a stronger level of trust than I've seen or experienced on any other project. Karl eats, sleeps and breathes Whilamut Passage Bridge. You can trust him to do the right thing, at the right time, for the right reasons – always thinking of what's best for the project."

– Jeff Firth, project manager at Hamilton Construction Co.



Karl Wieseke was all smiles during the Aug. 3 opening celebration.

Posted by Jyll Smith, ODOT PIO at 2:05 PM

Wednesday, November 13th, 2013

Restoring riparian habitats

From ODOT

Restoring riparian habitats

Last month I wrote about plans for the [natural viewing](#) area on the south bank of the Willamette River. This project also includes restoration of a nearby creek that has been tunneled underground for years.

The south bank of the Willamette River Bridge project area is home to a [network of waterways](#), including Augusta Creek. This small tributary to the Willamette River is habitat for black-spotted cutthroat trout, which swim upstream to spawn.

To minimize the effect of construction on these waterways, we worked with Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife and Hamilton Construction Co. to redirect Augusta Creek through a temporary fish ladder. This rerouting allowed us to build the multi-use path viaduct and restore the [existing stream channel](#).

The restoration will not only improve access for the trout, but also will enhance habitat for other wildlife and help filter runoff before the water enters the river.



Here's a view of Augusta Creek along the Franklin Boulevard off-ramp this past summer. Crews installed fixed logs to improve fish habitat.

Once the multi-use path viaduct that crosses Augusta Creek opens to pedestrian and bicycle traffic next spring, crews will complete the stream restoration. The new and improved waterway will be completed next summer.



Looking south from the Knickerbocker Bridge, you see the multi-use path viaduct spanning Augusta Creek.

Posted by Frannie Brindleat 11:19 AM

Monday, November 25th, 2013

Shared sense of pride as project wraps up

From ODOT-

The Willamette River Bridge project has been my primary focus for a number of years. While our project team may feel as though this is our bridge, we remind ourselves that we tackled this project for others. We built this bridge for the community.

Technically, there are different owners for different portions of the project, including the cities of Eugene and Springfield, Eugene Parks and Open Spaces, and Willamalane Parks and Recreation District.



Crews use a manlift to finish details on the underside of the bridge.

As the construction schedule gets shorter, ODOT's project team continues to work very closely with the contractor to wrap up final details before we can turn the surrounding areas over to the owners for long-term maintenance. The new Whilamut Passage Bridge is open to traffic, and as with any construction project, there are many final details we still need to address before we consider the work complete.



Recently filled with equipment and materials, the north yard will eventually be home to 7,000 camas flower bulbs.

Some of the finishing details are less visible to the public, but one thing you'll probably notice is less equipment and material in the Whilamut Natural Area. We regularly evaluate the remaining work and decide whether the equipment and resources we have on-site are still needed. By the end of the year, the north yard, located in the Whilamut Natural Area,

will be cleared out and topsoil will be laid down for camas flowers and native grasses.

And when the dust settles and flowers start to bloom, we'll revisit the project site with a shared sense of pride knowing our part in this legacy for generations to come.

Posted by Karl Wieseke, ODOT Construction Project Manager at 10:45 AM

Monday, November 25th, 2013

Whilamut Passage Bridge inspires local artists

From ODOT-

The graceful arches of the Whilamut Passage Bridge have become an appealing subject for local painters, including Oregon Bridge Delivery Partners Assistant Project Manager Michael Kelley.

An engineer by trade, Michael believed painting was out of his comfort zone, but he thought art would be a fun way to commemorate his and his colleagues' work on the Willamette River Bridge project.

Inspired by watching the project take shape over the years, Michael and his wife contacted [Vino & Vango – We Do Painting Parties!](#) in Springfield. Vino & Vango offers public and private painting classes led by teachers who guide people through the painting process, allowing time to socialize and enjoy snacks and beverages.

When the Kelleys asked Vino & Vango Owner Pauline Hauder about adding the Whilamut Passage Bridge to the list of subjects, she and one of the instructors, Sarah, gladly accepted the suggestion.



Based on photographs and trips through the Whilamut Natural Area, Vino & Vango teacher Sarah created this model painting to use as a guide for students

Sarah created her rendition based on Pauline's photographs from trips to the Whilamut Natural Area. Sarah and Pauline suggested that the class remove some of the paths to help direct the viewer's eye to the focal point – the bridge. However, Michael wanted to paint that part of the scene accurately.

"The paths should stay," said Michael, knowing the importance of the project's intricacies. "Their positioning is very important because of a frog pond that lies between them."



Participants of the class celebrate their painting successes.

Nevertheless, Michael himself added his own details to the painting, including a slightly arched bridge deck and the widely known Pre's Trail.

His painting is a lasting memento of the project that means so much to him, his colleagues and the community.

Posted by Jyll Smith, ODOT PIO at 1:40 PM

Tuesday, December 3rd, 2013

Bicycle and pedestrian paths will reopen this week

From ODOT-

We are excited to report that bicycle and pedestrian paths in the Whilamut Natural Area of Alton Baker Park, near the new Whilamut Passage Bridge, will be open in their final configuration by Dec. 6. This includes Pre's Trail, the North Bank Path and North Walnut Road.

Later in December, crews will remove the construction yard and fence at the north end of the Knickerbocker Bridge and take out the temporary detour paths. That work should be completed this winter.

Path users may experience some intermittent path delays or detours, while the construction team finishes installing design enhancements near the bridge. Please continue to use caution while traveling through the area.

We want to thank all path users for their patience during path closures and detours over the past four years. These closures and delays were necessary for everyone's safety during construction of the new Interstate 5 Bridge. We appreciate your support and the efforts of project leaders to minimize the inconvenience.

Posted by Jyll Smith, ODOT PIO at 9:35 AM

Wednesday, December 4th, 2013

Arches add to breathtaking scenery on the Willamette River

From ODOT-

Just before the close of the in-water work period, construction crews removed the final sections of the [work bridge](#) last week, exposing a stunning view.

With the materials from the work bridge completely gone, the shapely arches of the Whilamut Passage Bridge complement the natural beauty of the rippling river. The new bridge design offers an entirely different view of the river, unobstructed by piers, a departure from the profile of the [previous Interstate 5 Bridge](#).



Afternoon sunshine highlights the graceful arches in this view of the north bank of the Willamette River.

Be sure to take a peek next time you're in the area. Some of my favorite viewing spots are from the Knickerbocker Bridge and, further to the east, the South Bank Path.

Posted by Jyll Smith, ODOT PIO at 11:38 AM

Monday, December 9th, 2013

A big thank you to Hamilton Construction

From ODOT-

As the project winds down, it's time to express our deep gratitude to those who've been on the front line for the past four years – working in all kinds of weather.

Hamilton Construction, along with its many talented subcontractors, has successfully tackled a complicated bridge project that spanned a broad river, a well-loved park, a busy local boulevard and a railroad.

By the end of this year, Hamilton's work on the site will be all but done. The project office, Hamilton's temporary home for the past four years, will be gone from its site on Franklin Boulevard by the end of January. Team members will, however, stay involved with the project through spring to finish stream restoration and complete the south bank viaduct.

Not only did the Hamilton team continually stay ahead of schedule and under budget, it did so with utmost professionalism. Project team members used many innovative building techniques while diligently protecting the environment. They also were extremely helpful to the public involvement team by quickly responding to questions and graciously helping us with community events on the site.

With more than 70 years' experience, Hamilton is a partner ODOT can count on to build a project as complex as the Whilmut Passage Bridge, and we look forward to more opportunities to partner with the company in the future.

Posted by Jyll Smith, ODOT PIO at 2:57 PM

Monday, December 9th, 2013

The making of a culture landmark

From ODOT-

By now, you've likely seen the "River" design enhancement that has graced the north end of the Whilamut Passage Bridge since August.

Watch our latest Behind the Orange Cones video to watch it be created. You'll also hear from Lillian Pitt, the Native American artist who was inspired by her heritage as she designed the piece.

It's been fascinating to watch craftspeople transform simple sheets of stainless steel into the beautiful sculpture that will pay tribute to the Kalapuya for decades to come.

Posted by Jyll Smith, ODOT PIO at 3:01 PM

Thursday, December 19th, 2013

Time capsules preserve project's history

From ODOT-

Earlier this year, we collaborated with elementary school children to preserve artifacts of local history in time capsules to be sealed inside the new Whilamut Passage Bridge.

Teachers incorporated the project into curricula about architecture, science, technology and the environment. Project managers from Hamilton Construction volunteered for classroom visits to and hosted site tours for participating schools.

Students from local elementary schools filled the time capsules with model bridges, pictures, letters to the future and their favorite books. (Visit this previous [blog post](#) to read more about their experiences.)

Hamilton, OBEC Consulting Engineers, ODOT and Oregon Bridge Delivery Partners also contributed a variety of items to the time capsules. Their chosen keepsakes included newspaper clippings, project newsletters, Mylar project plans and photographs of the construction process.

Crews installed the time capsules inside the base of the northbound bridge's arches on Dec. 11. The keepsakes will remain safe and dry until they are recovered at the end of the bridge's life, probably 75 to 100 years from now.



Here, a time capsule from Buena Vista Elementary School is placed into a specially made cove of the Whilamut Passage Bridge's arch, where it will likely rest for 75 to 100 years.

“We thought we might spark students’ interest in the construction and engineering industries by asking them to help us fill the time capsules,” said Hamilton Project Manager Con O’Connor. “It was also a fun way for the team to close out and commemorate our work on the project.”



A crew member crawled down into the cove to place the time capsules inside the bridge's arch before it was sealed.



Hamilton Construction's Con O'Connor, Jeff Firth and Karl Stelljes hold the stamp that will mark the concrete protecting the time capsule. It reads, "Time capsule enclosed 2013."

Posted by Jyll Smith, ODOT PIO at 10:26 AM

Thursday, December 19th, 2013

Goodbye!

From ODOT-

Goodbye!

This is my final post, as we wrap up the Willamette River Bridge project blog this month. Our work on the project continues into next summer as we complete stream improvements, the path viaduct and design enhancements.

It has been the experience of my life to work on this project. The technical and professional challenges were extremely rewarding. I especially enjoyed the project tours with the children. Our experiences will truly help refine the model for developing and constructing future large projects.

I will miss working with such a talented project team of designers, office staff, inspectors, contractors and stakeholders. I feel I am saying goodbye to friends.

To the communities of Eugene and Springfield, thank you for your patience with our use of your open spaces and access paths and routes, and for your continued interest in the project. I'm glad I have gotten to know so many of you.

See you in the park!

Posted by Karl Wieseke, ODOT Construction Project Manager at 10:46 AM

Tuesday, December 24th, 2013

Thank you to our valuable partner in community involvement

From ODOT-

I want to give a shout out to [CAWOOD](#) for being a wonderful local partner on the Willamette River Bridge project.

As 37-year veterans of communications in Eugene and beyond, CAWOOD's team members definitely have their fingers on the pulse of the community. They always had sound advice on what residents would most want to know about and how best to reach them.

They were the here, there and everywhere eyes and ears of this project, attending weekly construction meetings to stay on top of the latest potential impacts to motorists and path users. Their close coordination with the construction team ensured that they had current and thorough information, plus a deep understanding of the stories behind the work.

Their help allowed us to expand public engagement beyond simple news releases to include informative tours of the project site and kiosks for the park paths.

It was CAWOOD's expertise that led to the success of our opening celebration. The team came up with the idea for a self-guided tour and worked tirelessly on hundreds of logistical details, from the creative hay bale signs to the parking and shuttle service.

And finally, CAWOOD has been essential in facilitating meetings of the Community Advisory Group and Design Enhancement Steering Committee to ensure all voices were heard during the design enhancement process.

CAWOOD has earned the trust of the community, and it has been a joy to work with the entire team.

Posted by Jyll Smith, ODOT PIO at 9:33 AM

Tuesday, December 24th, 2013

A new perspective on public involvement

From ODOT-

As I write my final post for the Willamette River Bridge project blog, I realize that in my 22 years at ODOT I've never seen a community group this involved in a construction project.

I've enjoyed working with citizen representatives on the Community Advisory Group and Design Enhancement Steering Committee to create public places that honor the cultural history of area and mark an important transportation improvement for all users.

People who bike and walk on the paths will enjoy the beauty at a slow speed. They will see the culmination of design, construction and art work where the bridge's arches touch down to embrace the beauty of the natural surroundings.

From their vehicles on top of the bridge, commuters will know they are in a special place as they pass over the river and come upon the design enhancements that embrace the Kalapuya heritage.

It has been an eye-opening experience to work so closely with the community. I learned a lot by listening to people who've spent many years enjoying the park land surrounding the bridge. And I think they learned a lot about the parameters we as a public agency need to work within.

When relationships are valued and folks are respected for the perspectives and talents that they bring to the table, it can lead to accomplishments that everyone can be very proud of. This cooperation brings lasting value to the community.

Frannie Brindle
ODOT Region 2 Area 5 Manager
Posted by Frannie Brindle [2:15 PM](#)

Monday, December 30th, 2013

Signing off

From ODOT-

When I joined the Willamette River bridge project in 2008, the team was still planning the bridge design. Our citizen volunteers were strategizing the overall theme, Whilamut Passage, which would guide the vision for this special place by honoring its past, present and future visitors.

We continued to engage the public through construction by offering site tours and seeking input on the design enhancements. We've held many community events that were well-attended, and I was always energized by the passion of the Eugene-Springfield community. I feel I can call this place my home away from home, and I will never forget the many wonderful people I have met.

My vision for this important project was a much higher level of public engagement than is typical. From virtual open houses and ODOT's first blog to a design enhancement steering committee, I'm extremely proud of the entire team's willingness to work together and surpass anyone's expectations. Our extensive public involvement has become a model that my colleagues at ODOT and other state agencies are now seeking to emulate.

I am touched by the enthusiasm of our city partners in working with us. I was tickled when, during our groundbreaking ceremony, Mayor Piercy of Eugene told me she was excited to keep her golden shovel. It's a moment she still talks about!

While the blog may be done, we are still completing work on and around the bridge. Watch for more design enhancements, interpretive displays and the opening of the path viaduct in 2014.



On a recent cold day, steam rose toward the new arches of the Whilamut Passage Bridge.
Posted by Jyll Smith, ODOT PIO at 12:28 PM