



Jesse Tinsley/The Spokesman-Review

A man fishes for salmon in the Snake River above the Lower Granite Dam in Washington state in 2016.

Feds narrow options for dams and salmon

By COURTNEY FLATT
Northwest Public Radio

Federal agencies are a step closer to deciding how best to manage the Columbia River system and protect endangered fish. They outlined goals for a range of plans at a public meeting Thursday.

A series of public meetings this past year gave the agencies plenty to think about. They received more than 400,000 comments about how to protect endangered salmon and steelhead and, at the same time, maintain navigation channels for river traffic, control floods, and meet hydropower demands.

The agencies have narrowed down their options to 230 possible ideas that could help solve problems in the dam system — from warm waters that kill fish to droughts that shrink irrigation supplies.

“If you try to meet all of our objectives, what’s the right balance for that? We want to be able to show the trade-offs,” Rebecca Weiss with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers said.

One controversial option that the agencies have so far left on the table is the breaching four dams on the lower Snake River — something that is supported by fish and conservation groups.

At the meeting, people wondered:

- Is the government considering how increas-

ing amounts of renewable energy affects the grid? (Yes, they’ll look at what the different plans could mean for renewable energy development — but this may be more of an indirect question they ask.)

- Are they going to consider how removing the lower Snake River dams could increase salmon numbers and help imperiled Southern Resident Killer Whales? (Yes, but they are working on how to answer both systemwide questions and more localized issues. And this may be more of a local problem.)

- Will the plan take into account how changing precipitation — from drought or climate change — could affect irrigation supplies? (Yes, irrigation is one of the main reasons the federal agencies operate the dams.)

State looks at seven scenarios for imposing Portland toll road

Traffic impact measured over next 10 years

By PARIS ACHEN
Capital Bureau

The Oregon Department of Transportation will conduct modeling of seven tolling scenarios along Interstates 5 and 205 to see how the variations would affect traffic and nearby neighborhoods in the Portland metro area in the next 10 years.

The work is the next step for a regional committee charged with coming up with recommendations for how to toll Portland-area freeways. The committee’s goal is to offer a plan that would help manage vehicle bottlenecks and raise funds for congestion-busting projects.

A \$5.3 billion transportation-funding package, passed earlier this year, required the Oregon Transportation Commission to consider tolling in the Portland metro area. It is not required to implement tolling.

The committee is scheduled to submit recommendations by June to the commission. The decision on a tolling scheme rests with the commission.

It’s unlikely that the tolling methods would be uniform along the two interstates, as segments of the freeways have



Pamplin Media Group

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different geographic obstacles, said David Ungemah, a consultant with New York-based transportation engineering and management firm WSP USA.

Options include tolling all lanes of the freeways; tolling an existing lane, possibly in segments; or adding a new toll lane, Ungemah said.

The tolls could be priced at set amounts or dynamically according to congestion or time of day.

The seven scenarios to be modeled are:

- Both interstates would be tolled on all lanes in both directions;

- Both interstates would have one existing lane in each direction converted to a toll lane;

- Both interstates would have an additional toll lane constructed in each direction;

- I-5 would have one toll lane and I-205 would have one toll lane constructed in each direction;

- I-5 would be tolled on every lane in both directions; no tolls on I-205;

- I-5 would have one existing lane in both directions converted to a toll lane; I-205 would have all lanes in both directions tolled;

• I-5 would have one existing lane in both directions converted to a toll lane; I-205 would have an additional lane constructed in both directions to toll.

The Department of Transportation also will analyze how traffic would change on the interstates in the next 10 years if no tolls are imposed.

The modeling would reflect road improvements planned in the next decade.


None of the scenarios are formal proposals, Ungemah said.

Members of the committee and the transportation commission intend to hold several public hearings before deciding on a final plan.

The commission also would determine toll rates and exemptions. Toll booths would not be used to charge drivers. Instead, the agency would use transponders to register a toll charge and license-plate identification to send bills to drivers without transponders, said Travis Brouwer, ODOT assistant director.

“Most systems read license plates for vehicles without transponders and send a bill in the mail,” Brouwer said.

“That’s how Washington’s system works.”



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Laura Bohm

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