



U.S. SENATOR MARIA CANTWELL WASHINGTON

Cantwell Leadership on I-5 Bridge Replacement Project

Sen. Cantwell is a longtime champion of Washington state's infrastructure priorities. Her vision for the Mega Grant Program – which would eventually be adopted into the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) – started to form all the way back in 1987. That year, her first as a member of the Washington State House, then-Rep. Cantwell supported legislation to increase funding for a state-funded account to pay for major transportation improvement projects across the state. Sen. Cantwell recognized that certain transportation projects can support economic growth throughout an entire region, but are too expensive for the local community to fund on their own.

In 2021, Sen. Cantwell applied the same principle on a national scale and [authored the Mega program](#) in her role as chair of the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation. The program, which was adopted into the BIL, authorizes \$5 billion in federal funds over five years for projects that are critical for the U.S. economy but too large or complex for existing funding programs.

Timeline of Sen. Cantwell's Actions:

1987-1989: Sen. Cantwell supported amendments to increase funding for Category C projects, Washington state's old mega projects program, during her tenure in the State House of Representatives in [1987](#) and [1989](#).

July 28, 2005: Sen. Cantwell secured [\\$8 million](#) to support planning for the I-5 Bridge replacement to help the state explore various options for replacement the bridge as a part of the 2005 Surface Transportation Bill.

January 21, 2009: During Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood's nomination hearing, Sen. Cantwell [pressed](#) him on what the Administration was going to do to support mega projects like the I-5 Bridge, the Alaskan Way Viaduct, and the 520 Bridge.

March 24, 2021: Sen. Cantwell chaired a [Commerce, Science, and Transportation Committee hearing](#) outlining priorities for infrastructure investment and what would later become key provisions of the BIL. The Senator highlighted how mega projects, like the I-5 Bridge, are vital to regional economies. [OPENING REMARKS: [VIDEO](#) | [AUDIO](#) | [TRANSCRIPT](#)] [WITNESS Q&A: [VIDEO](#) | [AUDIO](#) | [TRANSCRIPT](#)]

June 10, 2021: Sen. Cantwell introduced her [bipartisan](#) S. 2016, Surface Transportation Investment Act, which authorizes the Mega Projects Grant Program.

June 16, 2021: The Surface Transportation Investment Act [passed](#) the Senate Commerce Committee, which Sen. Cantwell chairs, with strong bipartisan support.

July 28, 2021: The President [announced](#) the BIL deal. Sen. Cantwell's Surface Transportation Investment Act as passed by the Senate Commerce Committee is included as part of the deal.

August 10, 2021: The BIL is passed by the U.S. Senate. Sen. Cantwell voted in favor of the legislation and delivered remarks on the Senate floor heralding the legislation's passage into law. [[PRESS RELEASE](#) | [VIDEO](#) | [AUDIO](#) | [TRANSCRIPT](#)]

November 6, 2021: President Biden signed the BIL into law. The legislation included a new \$5 billion Mega Projects Grant Program authored by Sen. Cantwell and \$12.5 billion for the Bridge Investment Program (BIP). [[PRESS RELEASE](#) | [FULL BILL TEXT](#) | [BILL SECTION BY SECTION BREAKDOWN](#)]

March 23, 2022: The U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) opened applications for transportation infrastructure project grant programs authored by Sen. Cantwell, such as the Mega Projects Grant Program and the Infrastructure for Rebuilding America (INFRA) Grant Program. [[PRESS RELEASE](#)]

April 13, 2022: Sen. Cantwell joined local officials to tour the I-5 Bridge and encouraged them to apply for federal grant programs that would assist in covering the cost of the replacement project. [[PRESS RELEASE](#) | [PHOTOS](#)]

June 6, 2022: DOT opened applications for \$2.36 billion through the Bridge Investment Program made possible by the BIL. [[PRESS RELEASE](#)]

August 30, 2022: Sen. Cantwell sent a letter to U.S. Secretary of Transportation Pete Buttigieg to support federal funding for the I-5 Bridge Replacement Program, specifically for a DOT seismic study grant. [[LETTER](#)]

October 13, 2022: Sen. Cantwell announced **the first federal dollars** officially allocated for the I-5 Bridge Replacement Program. The project received a \$1 million seismic study grant through DOT's Federal High Administration's Bridge Planning Grant program. [[PRESS RELEASE](#) | [VIDEO](#) | [AUDIO](#) | [TRANSCRIPT](#) | [PHOTOS](#)]

June 27, 2023: DOT [opened](#) applications for \$2 billion in mega projects funding.

August 28, 2023: Sen. Cantwell led the entire State of Washington Congressional delegation in sending a letter requesting funding for the bridge through the mega projects program. [[LETTER](#)]

November 13, 2023: Sen. Cantwell called Secretary Buttigieg to highlight the importance of the project to the state and the nation.

November 16, 2023: Sen. Cantwell sent a letter to Secretary Buttigieg advocating for funding for the project from FHWA's Bridge Investment Program (BIP) for the I-5 Bridge replacement project. [[LETTER](#)]

December 15, 2023: Sen. Cantwell announced that the I-5 Bridge replacement project will receive **\$600 million** in federal funding from the DOT's Mega Projects Grant Program she authored. [[PRESS RELEASE](#)]

January 3, 2024: Sen. Cantwell held a roundtable discussion with local leaders, stakeholders, and other federal officials. The group toured the I-5 Bridge and discussed future funding opportunities for completion of the replacement project. [[PRESS RELEASE](#) | [PHOTOS](#)]

May 13, 2024: Sen. Cantwell led her Senate colleagues in a letter advocating for additional funds for FHWA's BIP in the Fiscal Year 2025 Transportation, Housing, and Urban Development Appropriations Bill to support important projects like the I-5 Bridge. In the letter, Sen. Cantwell highlighted the direct impact that bridges like the I-5 bridge have on our economy and the safe movement of people and goods throughout our country. [[LETTER](#)]

July 12, 2024: Sen. Cantwell announced that the I-5 Bridge replacement project will receive \$1.499 billion in federal funds from the BIP.

The 105-year-old I-5 bridge is currently a bottleneck along the West Coast's vital I-5 freight corridor. The Interstate Bridge Replacement Program [reports](#) that \$132 million in worth of freight crossed the I-5 Bridge daily in 2020. According to the Bureau of Transportation Statistics, a total of [\\$97 billion](#) in goods traveled by truck either from Washington to Oregon or California, or from Oregon or California to Washington in 2022. Traffic congestion and bridge raises cause slowdowns at the aging infrastructure, and maintenance projects to keep the bridge in service through 2040 are [estimated to cost](#) over \$280 million – not including the cost of a seismic retrofit, which would be substantial. One span of the aging existing bridge is more than a century old and the other is more than 65 years old. Neither span has had a seismic retrofit, which is a significant concern in a region susceptible to earthquake activity: the entire structure is at risk of collapse in the event of a major earthquake.