Sen. Maria Cantwell

August 8, 2024

Federal Highway Administration I-5 Bridge Presser

[AUDIO] [VIDEO]

Sen. Cantwell: Well, good morning, everyone. It's so great to be here with Administrator Johnson and Administrator Bhatt. Thank you so much for being in the Northwest.

Thrilled to be here with my favorite Mayor, Anne McEnery-Ogle, who was queen of baking huckleberry pies for anybody who does anything to help this project come to fruition. So just get in line, she's a great baker.

And I'm so thrilled to be here with my two colleagues Senator Murray and Congresswoman Glusenkamp Perez because the three of us are a team. You know you hear about the three-on-three basketball in Spokane. Well, we got three-on-three here on this bridge, and we are doing everything possible to continue to make it a reality.

And I do want to thank our state representative and Senator Cleveland and Monica Stonier for their leadership in Olympia because we also know those weren't easy days, and those were days when people didn't want to get this done.

But we're here today to talk about a huge investment. We're here today to talk about the largest single federal transportation investment award in the state of Washington. We are here to celebrate the largest MEGA grant ever awarded. And we are here to celebrate the largest bridge grant ever awarded. So yes, we're here to celebrate the vision of this region and building this bridge for the future.

This final $1.5 [billion], I'm glad you rounded that up because we were just going to do it anyway. The $1.5 [billion] means that we can start the funding on design and ultimately construction which could happen as early as 2026. So I'm telling people, you better start taking pictures of this bridge because it's not going to be around much longer.

We're standing in the steps of this which is an essential freight route, a gateway to the Pacific, and it's a testament to how critical this bridge is to Clark County's greater Pacific Northwest strategy.

We're in a region that has really a powerhouse for the future, a linchpin to international trade. [More than] $130 million worth of freight crosses this bridge every day, and it's about getting products and services to the people that need them.

Everyone relies on this bridge from moving apples, and wheat, and barley overseas, to the semiconductor manufacturing, to everything from refrigerators. Everything moves across this bridge.

Since 2010 though, nearly 100,000 more people now call Clark County home. So that huge 22% increase means we can't afford to wait. Everyone knows that there is bridge traffic problems and over the past decade when Clark County added 40,000 new jobs, a 33% increase, it made Clark County one of the top 25 counties in the nation for wage growth [last year]. So we want to continue that.

That is why the infrastructure investment in the Bipartisan Infrastructure Bill is so critical. It's not just about building the bridge, although it's the key component. It's about opportunities for new businesses. It's about creating new hires. It's about growth and prosperity.

And mayor you may already know this, but according to the American Road and Transportation Builders Association, Clark County – I bet you Marie know this this number for sure. Clark County has received from the federal Bipartisan Infrastructure Bill, 84 transportation projects funded as part of that infrastructure bill.

So we know this is going to save our region time, we know it's going to help our economy grow, and just one last point about how important the chip sector is to the United States of America. We passed this major bill, [17%] of the semiconductor manufacturing industry in the United States of America exists right here in the Portland-Vancouver area.

It is our national challenge to make the supply chain come back to the United States and grow our economy so we're not depending on other nations for those semiconductors. And that's what we're trying to do today by building a bridge that helps this community grow and move to our better future.

Thank you all very much