Pacific Northwest Waterways Association

Columbia River Steamship Operators Association (CRSOA)

October 9th, 2026

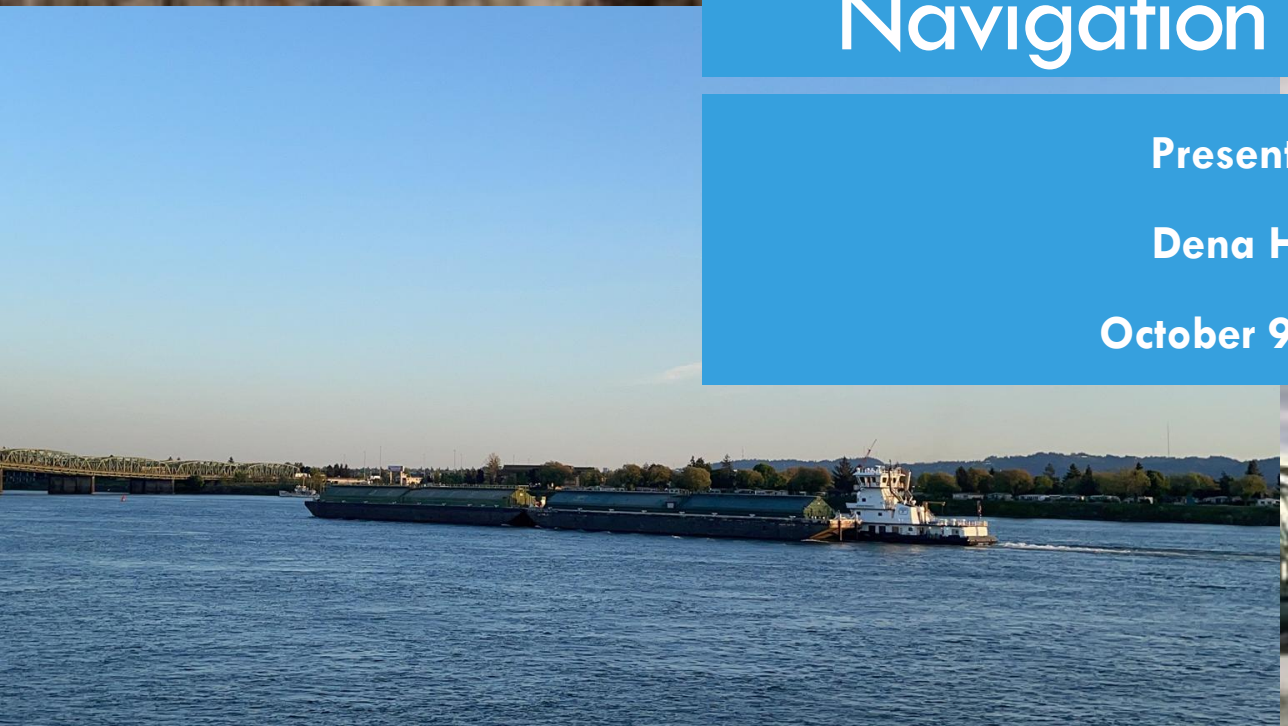
DENA HORTON

COBALT
IBR Update from a Navigation Perspective

Presented by

Dena Horton

October 9th, 2026



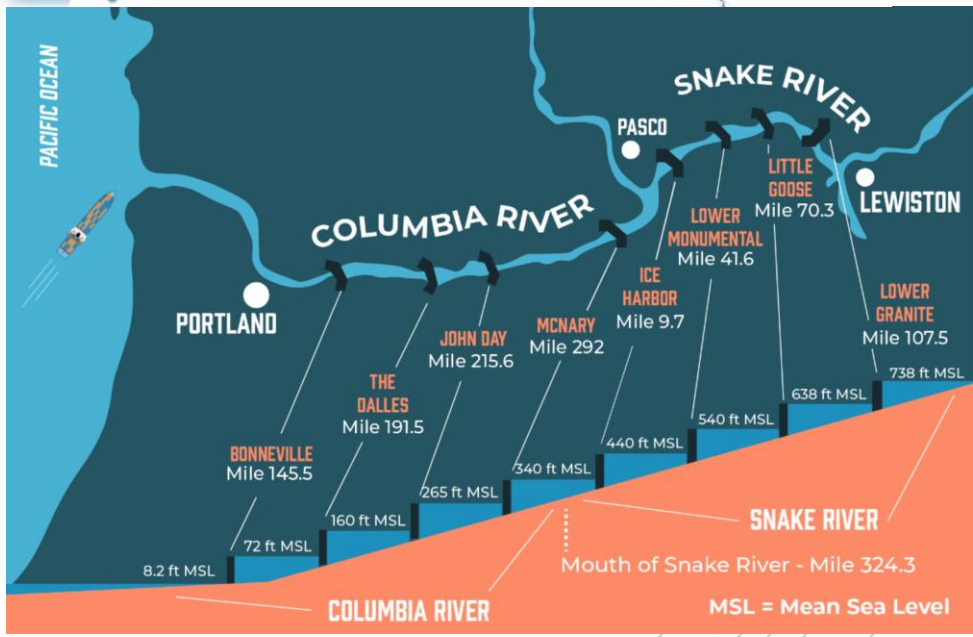
Marine Highway M-84

Deep Draft Portion

- Astoria to Portland, OR
- 110 miles long
- 43 ft. deep
- 51.1 M tons of cargo in 2023
- $25.3 B worth of cargo in 2023

Inland System

- Portland, OR to Lewiston, ID
- 365 miles long
- 14 ft. deep
- 8 lock & dams
- 8.5 million tons of cargo

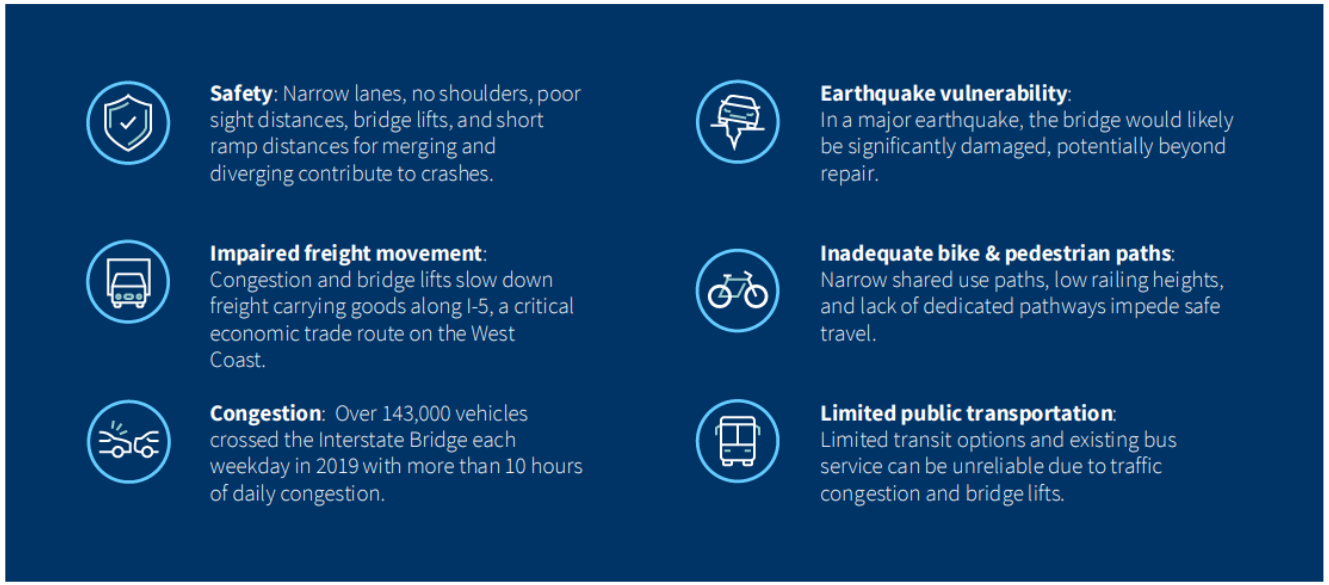


PNWA Represents River Users on CAG

2021 – PNWA representative seated on Citizen Advisory Group (CAG) for the Interstate Bridge Replacement (IBR) Program

2025 – IBR Citizen Advisory Group (CAG) later merged with Equity Advisory Group to become Joint Advisory Group – last meeting held December 17, 2025

Purpose and Need



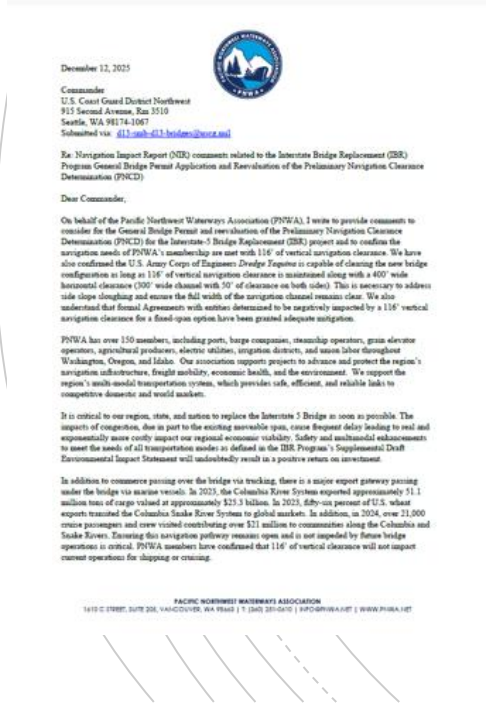
USCG PNCD - Will it be tall enough?

April 22, 2022 - Letter from Pacific Northwest Waterways Association (PNWA), American Waterways Operators (AWO), and Columbia River Towboat Association (CRTA) submitted for U.S. Coast Guard Preliminary Navigation Clearance Determination (PNCD) outlining concerns for consideration.

Decreasing 178 feet of navigation clearance to 116 feet leads to impacts of some river users.
NOTE: It is our understanding that, to date, all impacted river users' needs have been mitigated or addressed.

January 16, 2026 – USCG issued revised PNCD with minimum vertical navigation clearance requirement to greater than or equal to 116 feet.

Navigation Impact Report



December 12, 2025

Commander
U.S. Coast Guard District Northwest
915 Second Avenue, Rm 3510
Seattle, WA 98174-1067
Submitted via: d13-sub-d13-bridges@uscg.mil

Re: Navigation Impact Report (NIR) comments related to the Interstate Bridge Replacement (IBR) Program General Bridge Permit Application and Reevaluation of the Preliminary Navigation Clearance Determination (PNCD)

Dear Commander,

On behalf of the Pacific Northwest Waterways Association (PNWA), I write to provide comments to consider for the General Bridge Permit and reevaluation of the Preliminary Navigation Clearance Determination (PNCD) for the Interstate-5 Bridge Replacement (IBR) project and to confirm the navigation needs of PNWA's membership are met with 116' of vertical navigation clearance. We have also confirmed the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers *Dredge Yaquina* is capable of clearing the new bridge configuration as long as 116' of vertical navigation clearance is maintained along with a 400' wide horizontal clearance (300' wide channel with 50' of clearance on both sides). This is necessary to address side slope sloughing and ensure the full width of the navigation channel remains clear. We also understand that formal Agreements with entities determined to be negatively impacted by a 116' vertical navigation clearance for a fixed-span option have been granted adequate mitigation.

PNWA has over 150 members, including ports, barge companies, steamship operators, grain elevator operators, agricultural producers, electric utilities, irrigation districts, and union labor throughout Washington, Oregon, and Idaho. Our association supports projects to advance and protect the region's navigation infrastructure, freight mobility, economic health, and the environment. We support the region's multi-modal transportation system, which provides safe, efficient, and reliable links to competitive domestic and world markets.

It is critical to our region, state, and nation to replace the Interstate 5 Bridge as soon as possible. The impacts of congestion, due in part to the existing moveable span, cause frequent delay leading to real and exponentially more costly impact our regional economic viability. Safety and multimodal enhancements to meet the needs of all transportation modes as defined in the IBR Program's Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statement will undoubtedly result in a positive return on investment.

In addition to commerce passing over the bridge via trucking, there is a major export gateway passing under the bridge via marine vessels. In 2023, the Columbia River System exported approximately 51.1 million tons of cargo valued at approximately $25.3 billion. In 2023, fifty-six percent of U.S. wheat exports transited the Columbia Snake River System to global markets. In addition, in 2024, over 21,000 cruise passengers and crew visited contributing over $21 million to communities along the Columbia and Snake Rivers. Ensuring this navigation pathway remains open and is not impeded by future bridge operations is critical. PNWA members have confirmed that 116' of vertical clearance will not impact current operations for shipping or cruising.

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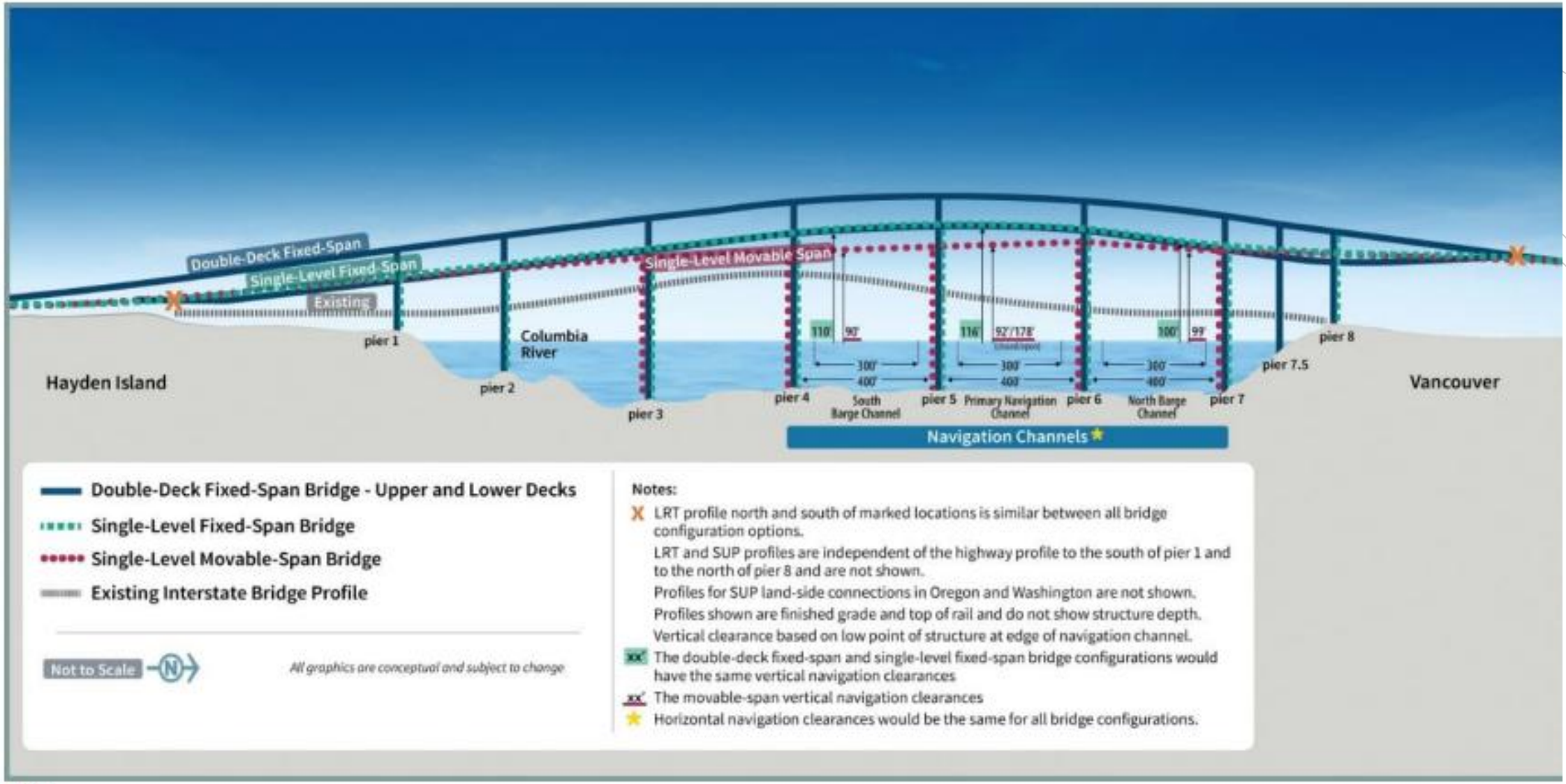
Interstate Bridge Replacement Program

Navigation Impact Report

Revised October 2025

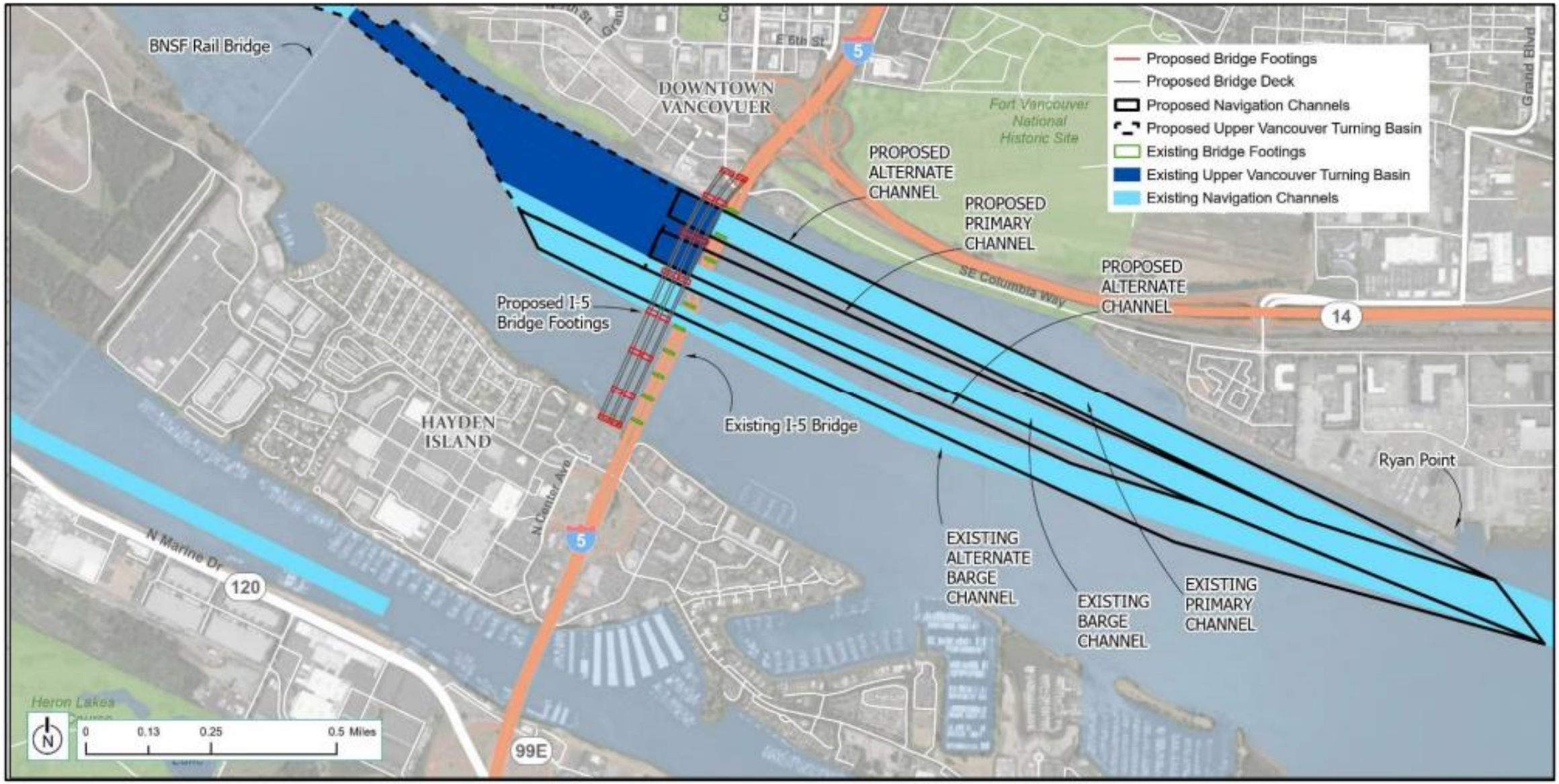
Prior Versions Submitted to U.S. Coast Guard November 2021, May 2022, September 2024

Figure B.5-1. Vertical and Horizontal Navigation Clearance Diagram



Key:
LRT = light-rail transit
SUP = shared-use path

Figure C.6-2. Existing and Proposed Columbia River Navigation Channels



Final SEIS and Record of Decision

DECISION

In this Amended ROD, FHWA and FTA select the "Amended Selected Alternative" which is also referred to as the "Modified Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA) with Recommended Design Options," for the IBR Program. The basis for this decision is provided in the following sections and appendices, as well as the supporting NEPA documents, including the IBR Program Final SEIS.

The Interstate Bridge Replacement Program Amended Record of Decision is hereby approved.

YAMILEE P VOLCY	KEITH LYNCH	SUSAN KAY FLETCHER
Digitally signed by YAMILEE P VOLCY Date: 2026.07.01 10:01:08 -07'00'	Digitally signed by KEITH LYNCH Date: 2026.07.01 09:56:08 -07'00'	Digitally signed by SUSAN KAY FLETCHER Date: 2026.07.01 09:51:20 -07'00'
Yamilee Volcy FHWA Washington Division Acting Administrator	Keith Lynch FHWA Oregon Division Administrator	Susan Fletcher FTA Region 10 Administrator

Modified Locally Preferred Alternative with Recommended Design Options

Proposed investments in the Program corridor include:

- A new, single-level fixed-span Columbia River bridge built west of the existing bridge
- Improvements to seven interchanges north and south of the Columbia River
- Extension of light rail from Portland to Vancouver and bus on shoulder express service
- One auxiliary lane in each direction for merging of and on I-5 and safety shoulders on the bridge
- Improvements for people who walk, bike and roll throughout the program area
- Variable rate tolling for motorists traveling over the Columbia River to pay for the new bridge and manage congestion

Navigation Impacts During Construction

July 24, 2026

Commander (dpw)
United States Coast Guard
Northwest District
915 2nd Ave, Rm 3510
Seattle, WA 98174
Transmitted via: [redacted]

RE: U.S. Coast Guard Public Notice DNW-PN-01-26 – Application Received for the Replacement of the I-5 Twin Bridges

Attn: Mr. Steven Fischer

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on behalf of Pacific Northwest Waterways Association (PNWA), in response to the U.S. Coast Guard Public Notice DNW-PN-01-26 – Application Received for the Replacement of the I-5 Twin Bridges.

PNWA is a non-profit, non-partisan trade association that advocates for federal policies and funding in support of regional economic development. Over the past 90 years, PNWA has grown to over 150 members, including ports, barge companies, steamship operators, cruise ship operators, grain elevator operators, agricultural producers, electric utilities, irrigation districts, and union labor throughout Washington, Oregon, and Idaho. Our association supports projects to advance and protect the region's navigation infrastructure, freight mobility, economic health, and the environment. We support the region's multi-modal transportation system, which provides safe, efficient, and reliable links to competitive domestic and world markets.

PNWA participated in the I-5 Bridge Replacement (IBR) Citizen Advisory Group (CAG) representing river users. The CAG meetings were primarily focused on bridge design elements and did not focus on construction schedule or construction logistics. Our main concern with the design of the bridge was ensuring the navigation clearance would be tall enough to allow our members and maritime commerce to continue to transit under the new bridge and operate safely.

During the U.S. Coast Guard Preliminary Navigation Clearance Determination comment period in 2022, PNWA expressed concerns about construction impacts and reiterated those concerns during the 2025 Navigation Impact Report comment period. As noted previously, *"Communication and coordination are paramount. In the future, as the IBR proceeds to demolition of the old bridge and construction of the new bridge, it will be very important to engage navigation interests and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to ensure that information about the phases of construction and any potential impacts to river traffic are clearly communicated far in advance. This information is critical to the maritime industry for planning and staging of products to occur to meet supply demands safely and impacts to cruise schedules can be avoided or minimized in advance. This communication and coordination will also be helpful in ensuring*

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June 25, 2026 – USCG issues Public Notice DNW-PN-01-26 seeking comments on navigation impacts of construction of the Interstate 5 Twin Bridges

July 24, 2026 – PNWA sends response letter outlining concerns regarding construction impacts to navigation

Key themes:

- Communication and collaboration with industry and stakeholders during construction and demolition is paramount to navigation safety
- Maintaining the reliability of the system to meet customer demand "just in time"
- Avoid and minimize impacts to shippers and cruise ship schedules
- Identify entity responsible for vessel and river traffic coordination and develop a detailed marine traffic management plan
- Potential congestion issues and increased bridge lifts needed during 17 months when all river traffic must use primary channel
- Need contingency plans for bridge lift mechanical failure due to increased use
- Simulation modeling used does not appear to match anticipated conditions
- Onsite qualified tug escort with qualified personnel and adequate vessel capabilities may be needed to assist with navigation between the existing bridge piers and construction bridge piers
- How will issues be tackled as they arise during construction?

Cost Estimate and Construction Schedule

"The best bridge is the one that gets built."

Sam Kim, IBR Joint Advisory Group Member

Updated Cost Estimate

- The estimated cost to build the five-mile corridor is $13.5 billion to $15.2 billion with a likely cost of $14.4 billion
- Current funding secured: $5.7 billion
- Core set of projects in Phase I estimate: $7.09 billion

Updated Construction Schedule

2026

- Procurement process – RFQ issued May 21, 2026
- Amended Record of Decision July 1, 2026

2027

- Select contractor

2028

- Begin construction

2034/2035

- Complete Phase I

2045

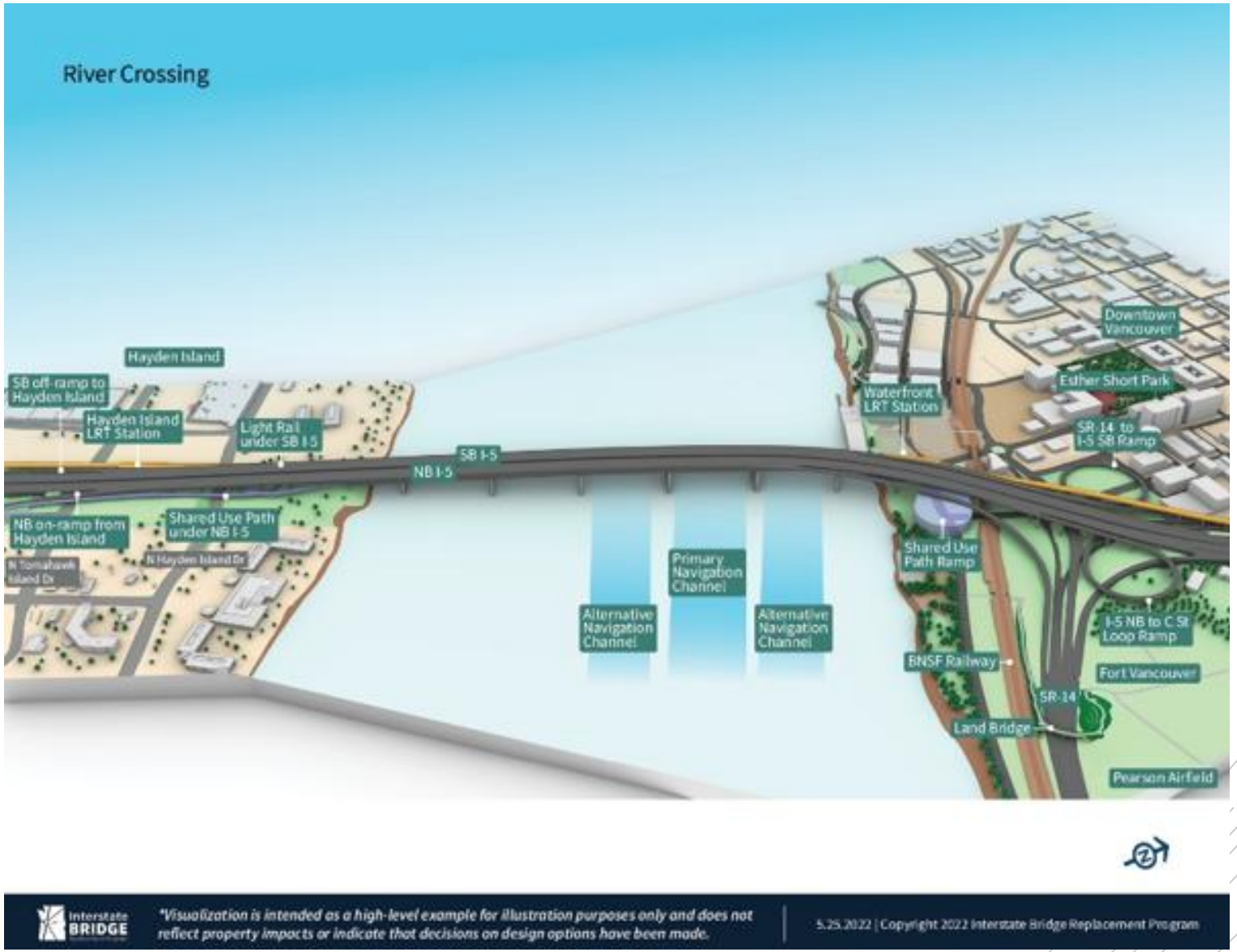
- Complete remaining phases of work (assuming permits and funding are secured)

Thank You – Questions?

Dena Horton, Deputy Director

Pacific Northwest Waterways Association

dena.horton@pnwa.net



Appendix

Figure 1-13. Existing Navigation Clearances of the Interstate Bridge

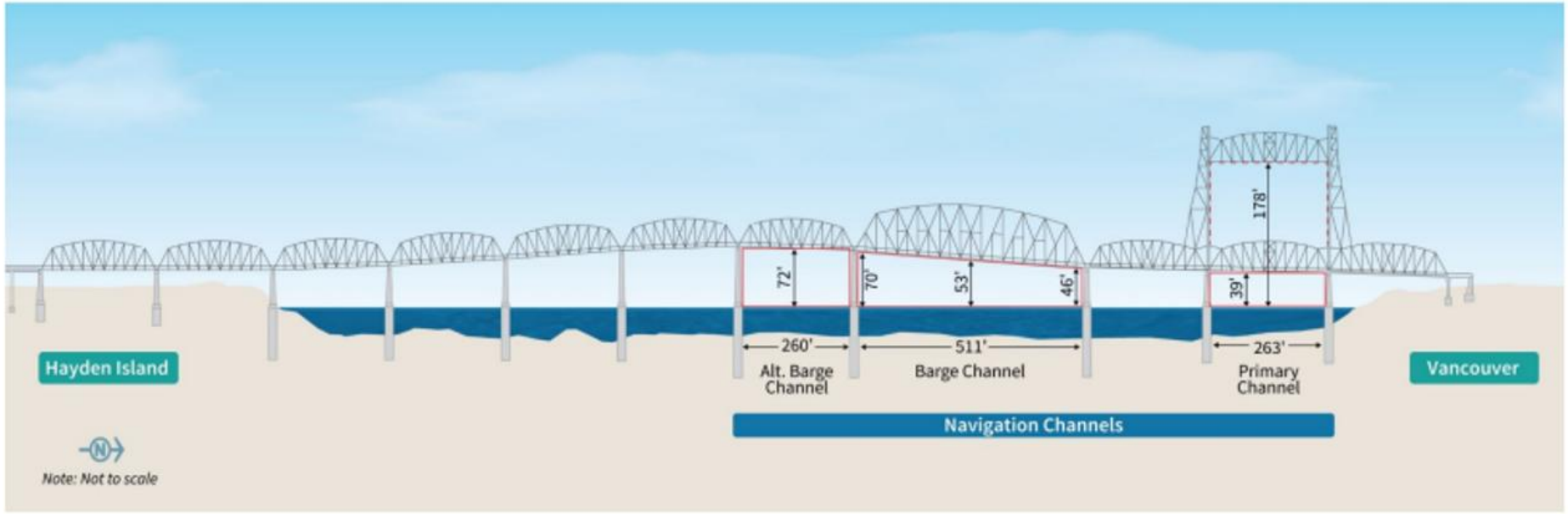
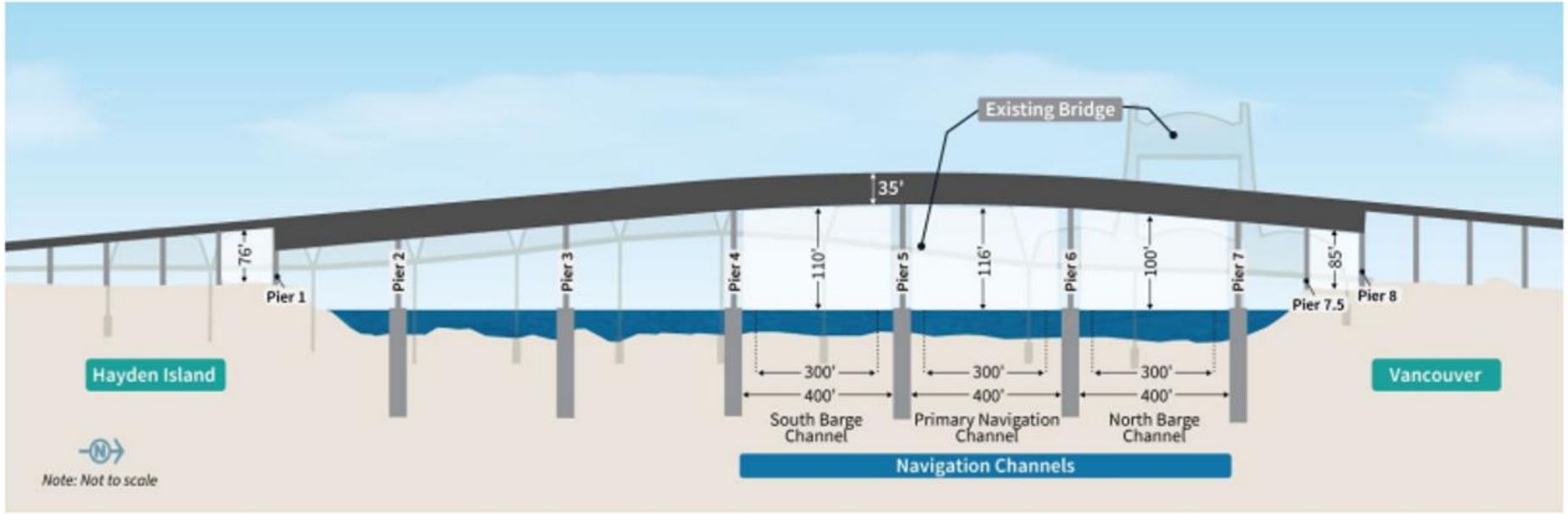


Figure 1-14. Profile and Navigation Clearances of the Proposed Modified LPA Columbia River Bridges with a Double-Deck Fixed-Span Configuration



Note: The location and widths of the proposed navigation channels would be same for all bridge configuration and bridge type options. The three navigation channels would each be 400 feet wide (this width includes a 300-foot congressionally or USACE-authorized channel (shown in dotted lines) plus a 50-foot channel maintenance buffer on each side of the authorized channel). The vertical navigation clearance would vary.

Figure 1-2: IBR Full Program Elements