

# Lower Snake River Dam Transportation Study

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Secretary of Transportation

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Lower Snake River Dam Lead

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Washington State  
Department of Transportation

## **Background**

The Snake River from Clarkston to Pasco contains four dams (Ice Harbor, Lower Monumental, Little Goose, and Lower Granite). There is interest in removing these dams for the benefit of salmon, steelhead, Pacific lamprey, bull trout, sturgeon, and other native fish species.

Understanding the transportation impacts of removing the lower Snake River dams has not been sufficiently addressed in recent studies. As a result, the 2023 Transportation Budget (ESHB 1125, Section 217 (11)) directed the WSDOT to conduct a study of highway, road, and freight rail transportation needs if the dams were removed. The study needs to consider options and impacts from shifting the movement of freight and goods (that currently move by barge through the lower Snake River dams) to highways, other roads, and rail. The study must generate volume estimates and evaluate scenarios for changes in infrastructure and operations that will be necessary to address those additional volumes. The assessment must include quantitative analysis based on available data in terms of both financial and carbon emission costs. The analysis must also include a robust inclusive public engagement process to solicit feedback from interested community members.

## **Progress**

During the third quarter of 2023, the WSDOT completed the following tasks:

- Project Lead hired
- WSDOT Steering Committee created
- Request for Qualifications written and advertised

## **Project Lead**

The WSDOT selected Jim Mahugh to lead the Lower Snake River Dam Transportation Study for the WSDOT. Jim has over 30 years of experience with the WSDOT with 22 of those years in the South Central Region and last served the Region as the Region Traffic Engineer. During his career with WSDOT, he has worked in operations, design, rail, and planning. His varied and relevant experience, plus his in-depth knowledge of Eastern Washington, make him an ideal candidate to lead this study.

## **WSDOT Steering Committee**

A WSDOT Steering Committee was formed that consist of WSDOT leadership including representation from:

- Executives: Marshall Elizer & Kerri Woehler
- Transportation Operations Division: Dongho Chang
- Development Division: Mark Gaines
- Multimodal Planning: Karena Houser
- Communications: Stefanie Randolph
- Government Relations: Steven Breaux
- Freight, Rail, and Port: Jason Biggs & Jason Beloso

### **Request for Qualification (RFQ)**

The RFQ defined the tasks the consultant must address. The RFQ was written by the Project Lead and reviewed by the WSDOT Steering Committee and the JTC representative (Alyson Cummings) prior to being advertised. The RFQ was advertised September 26. The RFQ was written to meet the requirement found in the proviso and includes 14 tasks:

1. Existing Goods Movement
2. Existing Volumes
3. Rail and Vehicular Volume Change
4. Roadway Infrastructure
5. Rail Infrastructure
6. Utility Infrastructure
7. Geological and Geographic Challenges – Improvements
8. Regulatory Challenges
9. Geological and Geographic Challenges – Existing
10. Transportation Safety
11. Commodity Impacts
12. Reduced Competition
13. Community Engagement
14. Interim and Final Report

The consultant’s responses to the RFQ were due October 24.

### **Next Steps**

In November, the WSDOT will be interviewing the consultants that responded to the RFQs. From those interviews, a consultant will be selected and work will begin on this effort in January 2024.

