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NEWS RELEASE

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COURTNEY: TIME FOR PUBLIC HEARINGS ON ONE-STATE BRIDGE PROPOSAL

“On just the 28th day of the 2013 Legislative session, the Oregon Senate gave final approval to the plan to build a new bridge over the Columbia River on I-5. It was a huge achievement that needed to be accomplished. It was the product of more than a year of planning and preparation that included public hearings and careful study by key members of the Oregon Legislature working with their counterparts in the State of Washington and Washington DC. That plan fell through when the Washington Legislature chose not to become equal partners in the I-5 bridge replacement project.

“Our Governor now wants to move forward with a new approach to building the bridge. His one-state plan has been the subject of numerous rumors and unofficial discussions. It’s time to address this issue head on.

“We need to bring together the key players in Oregon – members of the Legislature, the Governor, the State Treasurer, the Attorney General and stakeholders. We need to have an open and thorough evaluation of the opportunities and the challenges of Oregon forging ahead.

“We need to have open discussions with the federal government and the leaders in the State of Washington, including Governor Inslee, who are still needed to make this project work under the new approach.

“We need to see if we can find a way to do this without putting Oregon taxpayers at risk and without alienating a certain portion of the State of Washington.

“We need to see if we can find a reasonable path to build a new bridge to move traffic, move commerce and move people across the mighty Columbia River – and do it safely and efficiently.

“We need to have the votes and do it right.

“We should begin with public hearings and get the answers we need to fully consider this new approach. We should not predetermine the outcome of this process. If we take it up again, we should wait until the Legislature comes back into its regularly scheduled session on February 3.”