

Proposed New Alternative 2 (New Bridge in Existing Corridor)

The current Alternative 2 (Widen Existing Bridges) represents an option to improve mobility across the river within the existing corridor by widening the two existing (Marion and Center Street) bridges and associated ramp connections. Although this alternative has benefits for its lower cost and lesser impacts compared to Alternatives 3 and 4, the design team has concerns about its practicality and issues such as construction staging, and concentrating even more traffic at the currently congested ramps and bridgeheads.

In response to these concerns, the design team developed a different version of Alternative 2 that would place a new two-way bridge over the Willamette River between the Union Street Railroad bridge and the Marion Street bridge, rather than widening the existing bridges (see figure). On the west side of the river, the new bridge would connect to Highway 22 and to a new 4-lane arterial, Marine Drive. There would not be a direct connection to Wallace Road. On the east side, the new bridge would cross over the railroad, Front Street, and Union Street, and terminate directly onto Commercial Street north of Division Street. Several local street connections would be severed and rerouted to accommodate this option.

On the west side, the new bridge would serve traffic headed to and from Highway 22 and Marine Drive and Wallace Road north of Glen Creek. On the east side, the bridge would serve traffic headed to and from north Salem, Salem Parkway, I-5, and beyond. The existing Marion and Center Street Bridges would continue to serve most trips between West Salem and downtown. Advantages to the proposed new Alternative 2 over the Widen Existing Bridges concept include:

- A better connection between Highway 22 and Salem Parkway for through traffic.
- Wallace Road will remain a 5-lane facility instead of being widened to a 7-lane facility.
- Traffic operations at the Commercial Street and Marion Street intersection will be greatly improved by removing the signal and allowing traffic to exit the downtown streets more efficiently. (This is accomplished by closing southbound Commercial Street at Marion Street.)
- Traffic operations on most of the local street system will be better than with the “Widen Existing Bridges” concept.
- Construction staging will be greatly improved by not having to close Wallace Road or the existing bridges to widen these facilities.
- It opens up the Riverfront Park area to better pedestrian access to the downtown core.

Advantages and disadvantages will be discussed further at the joint Task Force and Oversight Team meeting on July 23.