

Bridge strikes and WSDOT response

House Transportation Committee

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Introduction

- Bridge strike examples
- Solution options
- Financial impacts and recovery



Westbound I-82 Bridge Over Yakima River
near Yakima and Selah

2025 Emergency structure projects

Route	Name	Cause	Month of Occurrence	Status
I-82	Yakima River, Selah	Bridge Hit	January	Open, Repaired
SR 165	Carbon River, Fairfax	Corrosion	April	Closed
US 20	Scott Paper Road, Skagit Co	Bridge Hit	May	Open, Repaired
SR 169	Green River, Dan Evans Memorial	Corrosion	August	Open, Repaired
SR 153	Methow River	Corrosion	August	Open, Repaired
SR 410	White River	Bridge Hit	August	Open, Repaired
SR 26	N. Fork Palouse River, Colfax	Barrier Hit	September	Open, Repaired
SR 167	SR 167 over 3rd Ave, near Auburn	Bridge Hit	September	In Construction
SR 104	Hood Canal Bridge	Bridge Hit	October	Open, Repaired
I-90	Bullfrog Rd, Cle Elum	Bridge Hit	October	In Construction

Bullfrog Road overpass at I-90



Bullfrog Road overpass at I-90

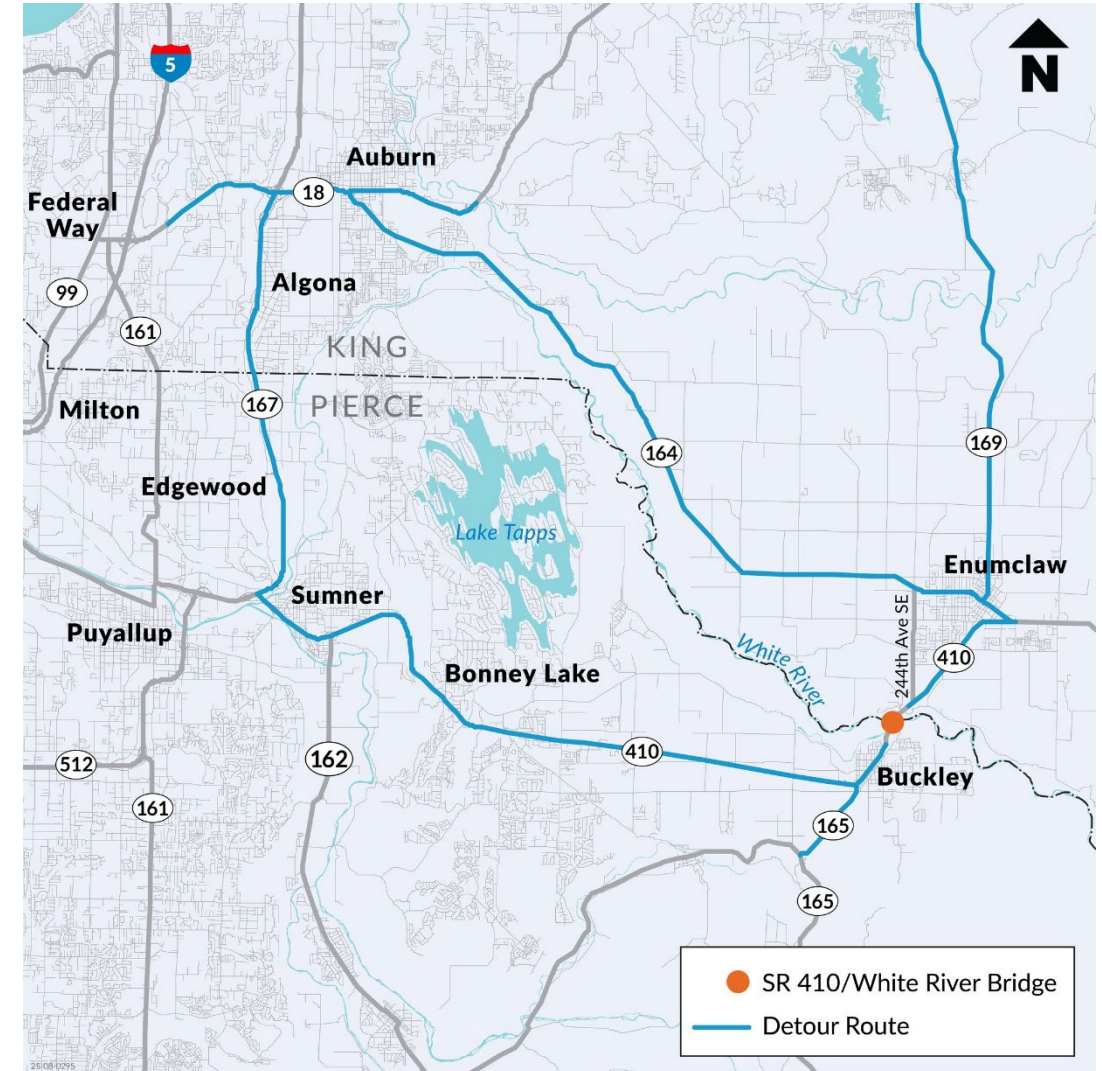


Driver cited for permit violation.



Westbound I-90 open after span demolition.

SR 410 White River – Buckley / Enumclaw



SR 410 White River – Buckley / Enumclaw



Driver cited for over-height violation.

Countermeasures

Driver Awareness tools and Education campaigns:

- ✓ Comprehensive routing tools and permitting systems
- ❑ Driver education and outreach campaign

Passive systems:

- ✓ Advanced warning signs
- ❑ Flashing beacons

Sacrificial systems:

- ❑ Height-restriction or impact bars
- ❑ “Tattle-chains” or hanging bars

Vehicle-based systems:

- ✓ Alert system that automatically warns drivers

Active systems:

- ❑ Over-height detection sensors with flashing lights



Example image from Eastern Transportation Coalition media campaign

Bridge height and warning systems

Washington State Department of Transportation Vertical Clearance Trip Planner

Vertical Clearance Input

Vehicle Height Input
Please enter vehicle height in feet and inches. Optionally, you can specify a route to limit the results to just that route.

feet ' inches "

Route Number (optional)
Select a route

☒ Include State Route ramps, spurs, and couplets

Map showing Washington state with cities labeled: Vancouver, Victoria, Seattle, Olympia, Portland, Salem. Scale: 200 km, 100 mi. WA State Parks GIS, Esri, TomTom, Garmin, FAO, N



WSDOT advance warning system at northbound SR 529 over the Snohomish River near Everett

Reference rules and regulations

For reference:

- **RCW 46.44.020** Legal vehicle height 14'-0"
- **WSDOT Traffic Manual 2.8** Low clearance warning signs required when clearance is 15'-3" or less
- **RCW 46.44.110** Liability for damage is upon the vehicle operator
- **WAC 468-38-070** Permitted moves are governed by the overhead obstruction
- **WAC 468-38-100** Pilot car requirements, pre-trip procedures



2013 Collapse of the I-5 Bridge
span over the Skagit River

WSDOT's Financial Recovery Team

- 4-person team
- Collects from 3rd parties who damage our infrastructure
- Currently have about 900 active claims
- Collect about \$20 million per biennium

Financial Recovery at WSDOT

RCW 46.44.110 - Liability for damage to highways, bridges, etc.

- Establishes that negligent motorists are responsible for damage to highway infrastructure
- Empowers WSDOT to collect damages from the negligent motorists

46.44.105 << 46.44.110 >> 46.44.120

PDF RCW 46.44.110

Liability for damage to highways, bridges, etc.

(1) Any person operating any vehicle or moving any object or conveyance upon any public highway in this state or upon any bridge or elevated structure that is a part of any such public highway is liable for all damages that the public highway, bridge, elevated structure, or other state property may sustain, as well as payment for vehicle recovery, impound, and storage charges to any registered tow truck operator dispatched by law enforcement or other agency, as a result of any illegal operation of the vehicle or the moving of any such object or conveyance or as a result of the operation or moving of any vehicle, object, or conveyance weighing in excess of the legal weight limits allowed by law.

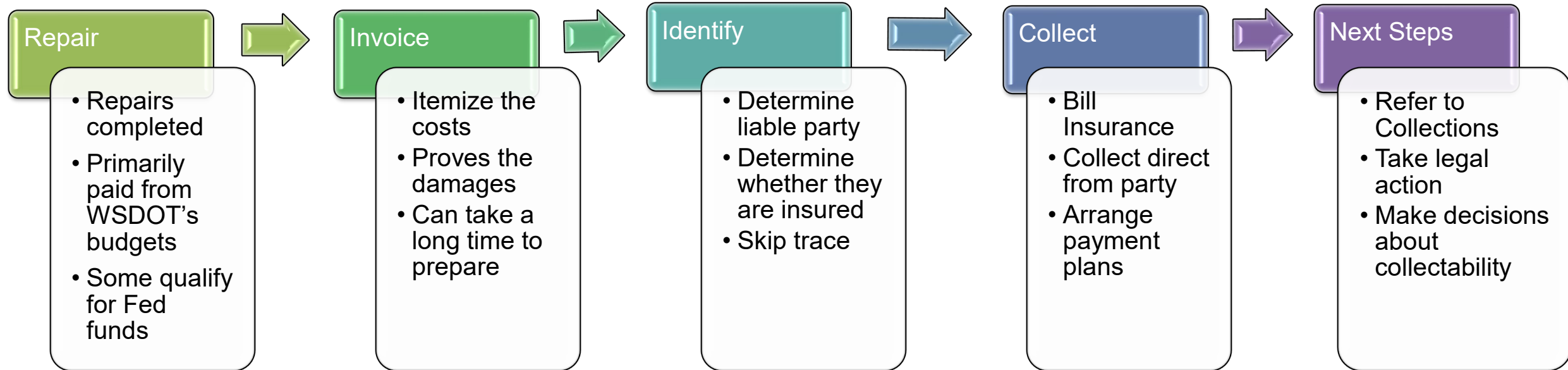
(2) This section applies to any person operating any vehicle or moving any object or contrivance in any illegal or negligent manner or without a special permit as provided by law for vehicles, objects, or contrivances that are overweight, overwidth, overheight, or overlength. Any person operating any vehicle is liable for any damage to any public highway, bridge, elevated structure, or other state property sustained, as well as payment for vehicle recovery, impound, and storage charges to any registered tow truck operator dispatched by law enforcement or other agency, as the result of any negligent operation thereof. When the operator is not the owner of the vehicle, object, or contrivance but is operating or moving it with the express or implied permission of the owner, the owner and the operator are jointly and severally liable for any such damage.

(3)(a) Such damage to any state highway, structure, or other state property may be recovered in a civil action instituted in the name of the state of Washington by the department of transportation or other affected state agency. Any measure of damage determined by the department of transportation to its highway, bridge, elevated structure, or other property under this section is prima facie the amount of damage caused thereby and is presumed to be the amount recoverable in any civil action therefor. The damages available under this section include the incident response costs, including traffic control, incurred by the department of transportation.

(b) Costs attributable to vehicle recovery, impound, and storage charges for any registered tow truck operator dispatched by law enforcement or other state or local agency may be recovered in a civil action instituted by the registered tow truck operator. The amount of nonpayment for vehicle recovery, impound, and storage charges to any registered tow truck operator dispatched by law enforcement or other agency under this section is presumed to be the amount recoverable in any civil action therefor and must not exceed the amounts established under the fee schedule adopted pursuant to RCW 46.55.118.

[2024 c 320 s 1; 2009 c 393 s 1; 1984 c 7 s 59; 1961 c 12 s 46.44.110. Prior: 1937 c 189 s 57; RRS 6360-57.]

WSDOT's recovery process:



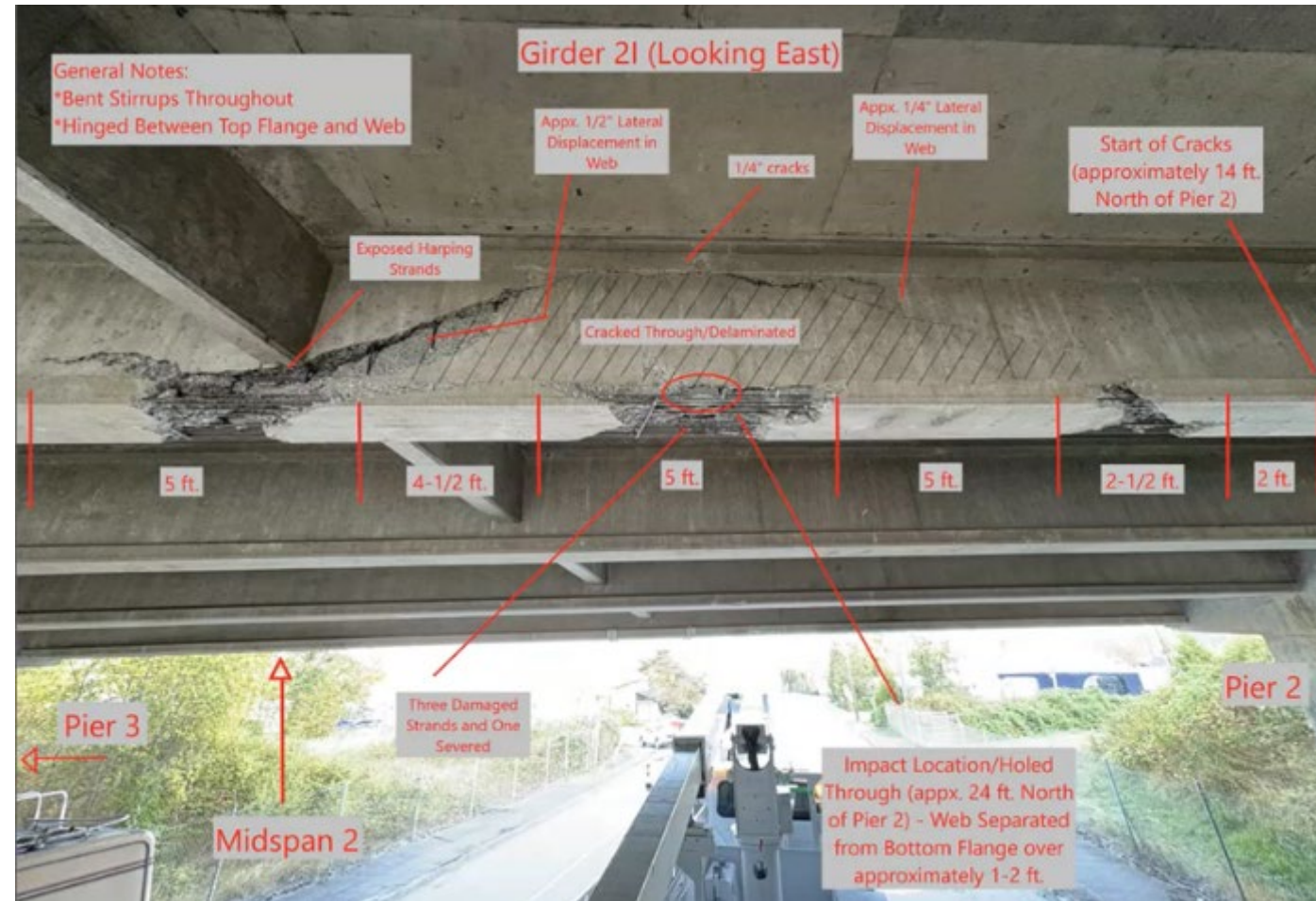
White River Bridge

- \$5 million+ in damages
- Responsible party is an employee driving a truck for Puget Construction Services in Buckley
- Claim established with their insurer, counsel appointed
- \$2 million liability limit
- Assets investigation underway
- \$1 million in first party insurance already received by WSDOT



SR 167 over Third Avenue in Pacific

- ~\$2.5 million in damages
- Responsible party is an employee driving a truck for Valley Recycling in Pacific, WA
- Claim established with their insurer
- \$1 million liability limit (not confirmed)
- \$1 million in first party insurance already received by WSDOT



I-5 at Bullfrog Road Overpass

- ~\$9 million in damages
- Oversized load carried by JNB Heavy Haul from Ontario, Canada
- Conoco Phillips cargo
- Claim established with the Canadian insurer, counsel appointed
- Unknown liability limit
- \$1 million in first party insurance imminent



Questions?

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