In 2015, the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) will begin construction on a project to replace the existing US 101 bridge over the Hoquarten Slough, north of downtown Tillamook. The purpose of the project is to improve safety and make it easier to get around. Specifically, ODOT will:

- Replace the existing three-lane bridge with a four-lane bridge that includes sidewalks on both sides and a shoulder/bike lane.
- Extend the downtown couplet on Main and Pacific avenues north to the bridgehead, eliminating the need for northbound traffic on Pacific Avenue to merge on Main Avenue before crossing the US 101 bridge.
- Widen the travel lanes on Main and Pacific avenues from 1st Street to 4th Street by narrowing the sidewalks. This approach will maintain parking on both sides of Main and Pacific avenues.
- Add turn lanes, crosswalks, and make other modifications at intersections.

In addition to benefitting those who walk, bike, or drive in downtown Tillamook, the project will also reduce the 100-year flood elevation, improve stormwater management, and restore habitat areas along the slough within the project area.

Floodplains
The 100-year floodplain is defined as land that has a one percent chance of being flooded in any given year. Within the US 101/OR 6 project area, large areas of land adjacent to Hoquarten Slough, particularly on the north bank, are designated floodplains with substantial commercial use.

Because the new bridge will be in the floodplain (like the existing bridge) ODOT performed a preliminary analysis to determine how it will change the 100-year floodplain. The analysis indicated that the new bridge as currently designed will decrease the current 100-year flood elevation by about one inch. City code requires that the project maintain (or decrease) the current flood elevation (that is, not making it worse). Although it will be small, this decrease in the flood elevation may also slightly reduce the area of land affected by a 100-year flood. The floodplain analysis will be refined during the project’s final design phase, and a permit will be obtained from the City of Tillamook.

The new bridge will be approximately five feet higher than the existing bridge. As a result, the new bridge will not be overtopped by a 100-year flood, as the existing bridge has been. However, because the elevation of Highway 101 north of the slough will remain unchanged, the roadway will continue to be impassible during 100-year flood events.
Project Exodus, a joint effort by the State of Oregon and local jurisdictions, evaluated methods to reduce flood impacts. The Governor’s Regional Solutions Center initiated Project Exodus to develop and implement a plan to reduce the adverse effects of flooding in the Wilson River floodplain. The project focuses on reducing the elevation and duration of flood events to minimize damages. The project could decrease the water surface elevation at and near the US 101 crossing of Hoquarten Slough. A construction date for Project Exodus has not been set.

Water quality
Currently, stormwater runoff in downtown Tillamook and north of the Hoquarten Slough is collected in a series of catch basins within the roadway piped to Hoquarten Slough without any treatment. This means stormwater containing a variety of pollutants such as oils, grease, and heavy metals from vehicles and local land uses, flows directly into Hoquarten Slough.

The US 101/OR 6 project will install new stormwater treatment units throughout the project area. Because stormwater from the reconstructed streets will be treated, pollutants flowing into the slough will be reduced. The amount of water that flows into Hoquarten Slough will also decrease because approximately one acre of impervious, or paved, surfaces will be removed.

Habitat along the Hoquarten Slough
The habitat areas along the banks of the Hoquarten Slough have been disturbed over the years by industrial use, vegetation removal, and other human activity. The aquatic habitat quality downstream of the existing US 101 bridge is considered good, with a relatively wide and intact riparian area. The slough is critical habitat for the threatened Oregon Coast coho salmon and green sturgeon.

In addition to the stormwater and floodplain benefits, the project will remove non-native vegetation during construction and will plant native trees and shrubs after construction. The project will also remove piers from the previous and existing bridges, which will improve fish habitat and water flow by reducing obstructions in the slough.

Learn more about the US 101/OR 6 project at www.tillamooktraffic.org