

COLUMBIA RIVER CROSSING COALITION

CASE STUDY



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Seafood distributor avoids interstate 5 corridor

In the business of selling seafood, “fresh” almost always is the key differentiator. It certainly is what customers are seeking when they place an order with Pacific Seafood Group.

In order to provide the freshest possible seafood, however, the company tells drivers to all but avoid Interstate 5 between north Portland and southwest Washington whenever possible.

“Our customers want their seafood as early as possible,” said John Figini, transportation manager for Pacific Seafood.

Achieving that goal just isn’t possible if the company relies on the I-5 crossing.

“The I-5 bridge is tough. It’s not so much the bridge itself but just getting onto the bridge. You’ve got so much traffic leading up to the bridge on the interstate. For a mile or so it’s just bumper-to-bumper, stop-and-go,” Figini said.

Each day, Pacific Seafood has 25 trucks on roads statewide, with each driver making 15 to 25 stops at restaurants and grocery stores. Ten company trucks traverse the Portland metro area daily, with two traveling across the Columbia River into southwest Washington.

Time spent sitting in traffic is time that the company’s clams, crabs, scallops, halibut and other products could be spent sitting on the dinner table.

“Our trucks are refrigerated but the idea still is to get our products to their destination as quickly as possible,” Figini said.

The company tells its drivers to stay off that section of I-5 starting at about 2 p.m. “They generally use I-205 because really you can have rush hour type of congestion on I-5 anytime,” Figini said.

That strategy has its limits, however, because Pacific Seafood is just one of a growing number of companies that shift traffic to Interstate 205 and away from I-5. The efficiency of I-205 is eroding.

“The I-5 crossing and the freeway leading up to it are just plain outdated,” Figini said. One span of the bridge dates to 1917, and the other dates to 1958. “It needs to be rebuilt in order to handle the demands of modern consumers,” he said.

"As a transportation manager, I have a front row seat to many of the breakpoints in our system. This one between Oregon and Washington certainly cannot be ignored any longer."