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## Weather impedes work on I-5 bridge

Christian Hill/The Olympian

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The windy and rainy weather that has plagued the Olympia area for a few months has delayed completion of the Chehalis Western Trail pedestrian bridge over Interstate 5.

Wilder Construction of Everett was scheduled to complete the \$1.8 million bridge in December.

"We're anticipating mid- to late January, but at this point, because of the weather, we haven't established the actual opening date," said Neal Uhlmeier, project engineer for the state Department of Transportation, which is managing the project.

The organizer of the ribbon-cutting ceremony is looking at Feb. 17 as a likely date, said Thera Black, senior planner for the Thurston Regional Planning Council.

Crews need to finish the grades to the bridge and paving, Uhlmeier said.

### Trail connection

The bridge will link the Chehalis Western Trail with the Woodard Bay Trail, which runs to Puget Sound. It will close a giant chasm on the Chehalis Western Trail for walkers and bicyclists, who are forced onto the Lilly Road or Sleater-Kinney overpasses to cross I-5.

### Two more bridges

Plans call for two bridges to cross Martin Way and Pacific Avenue and development of a permanent trail west of South Sound Center. Once completed, trail users will have an unimpeded trip from Woodard Bay to state Route 507 near Rainier. There, they can connect to the Yelm-Tenino Trail and continue on to those outlying communities.

The regional planning council, an intergovernmental board that develops plans and policies for transportation, growth management and environmental quality, awarded the initial \$500,000 in federal funds for the project dubbed "Bridging the Gap."

The cost of the three bridges and a permanent trail west of South Sound Center is estimated at \$11 million. So far, officials have secured \$7 million from local, regional and federal sources.

Thurston County had requested \$4 million in the governor's proposed 2007-08 budget but the money was not included. Officials will lobby for federal funding during the next budget cycle.

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