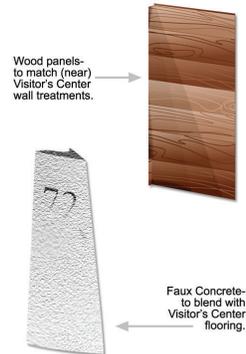
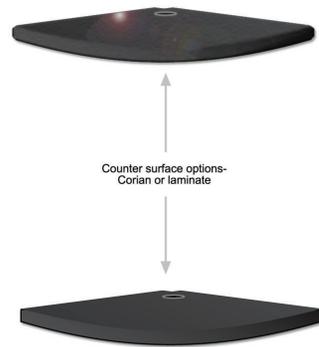


INTERPRETIVE KIOSK: Oregon State Parks - Details from the free-standing kiosk with texts written & used on the installed display panels.



Construction on the new Columbia River Highway progressed eastward from its start in Troutdale. Crews had built miles of dry masonry walls, parapet guardrail, pedestrian overlooks, and the most advanced bridges ever engineered. Then there were the tunnels.

The tunnel at Oneonta gorge allowed the highway to fit within its right-of-way adjacent to the railroad. Short and well-constructed, the tunnel was utilitarian in design. This was not the case for the second tunnel at Mitchell Point. At this site the engineers took liberties designing a marvelous sweeping tunnel with large windows (adits), elaborate masonry and incredible views.

Not ready to rest on their laurels, the designing engineers set about to put everything they had learned into the most complex and intricate feature on the Columbia River Highway; the Mosier Twin Tunnels.

Nowhere else on the route were so many elements designed into one structure.

The tunnels had a combined length of 350' blasted through a basalt rock face at nearly 300' above the railroad below it. This perch would offer commanding views of the Columbia River to the traveler.

To that effect State Engineers placed a viewing area between the closely coupled tunnels. Two windows, or adits were hewn from the longer tunnel. The adits offered practical ventilation and lighting.

Yet the design of these windows beckoned visitors to stop the car and step outside of the tunnel onto an elegant cliff-walk. The cliff-walk connected the adits with the observation area between the tunnels, while offering a panoramic view of the Columbia basin.

On completion in 1921 the tunnels had been lined with old growth cedar timbers and given a sturdy macadamized road surface. Each of the four entry portal rings had received distinctive ashlar stone facades. It was nothing short of Old-World artistry.

The highway gave merchants a safe and expedient route for their goods. The unique passage through the tunnels became a popular place for motorists to stop and explore on their way from Hood River to The Dalles.

Grand and elegant, the tunnels were built as if to last all eternity. Unfortunately, road building techniques used in the early 1900's were no match for the severe forces of weather and erosion on the twin tunnels. In early 1919 rockfall had been cited as a safety concern. The basalt through which the tunnels had been bored was shown to be unstable. The architectural beauty of the tunnels belied problems with its location. The State took measures to keep the tunnels in use. To deal with dangerous rockfall in pedestrian viewing areas the cliff-walk was closed off not long after the tunnels were opened. Larger commercial trucks and wider passenger vehicles took up more road bed than what had been designed for Model T's. The original split stone portal rings were removed to make traffic openings wider and replaced with simple concrete

portals. This did not solve the problem at a mid-tunnel curve. The narrow 16-foot roadbed did not easily accommodate modern vehicles driving at posted speeds. A necessary change from two-way to one-way traffic allowed increasingly larger vehicles to traverse the roadway. In the meanwhile, news reports told of many accidents and a fire.

Constant slides brought real fear to travelers, knowing some had been killed by falling rocks. Area residents used alternate routes in lieu of the tunnel passage. There seemed no real solution to the danger.

Then in 1953 a major slide at the west entrance dumped 24,000 cubic yards of rock onto the roadway. The route was impassable, and traffic was moved onto the new, but unfinished water-level highway below.

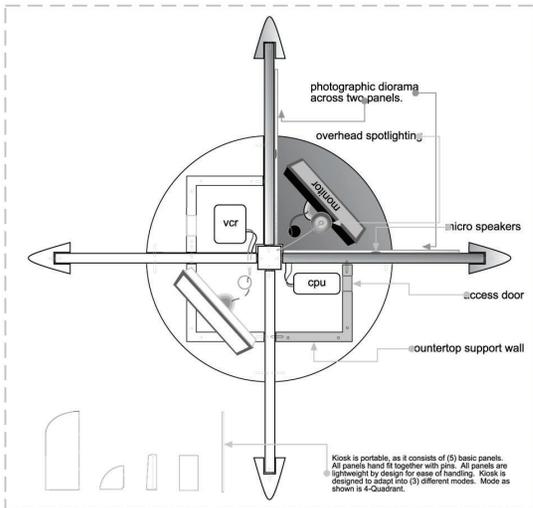
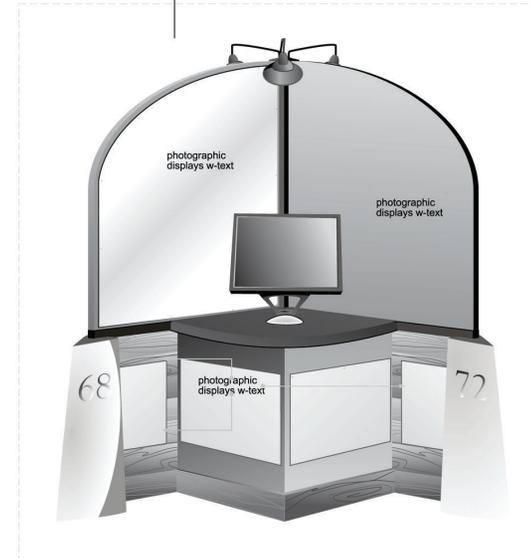
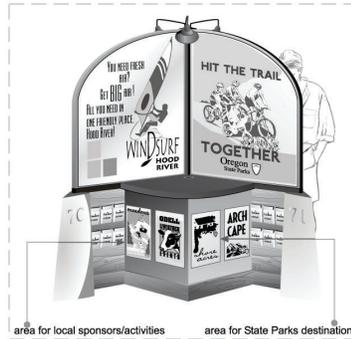
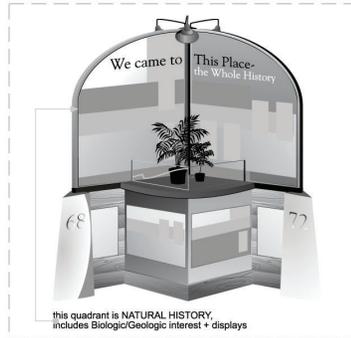
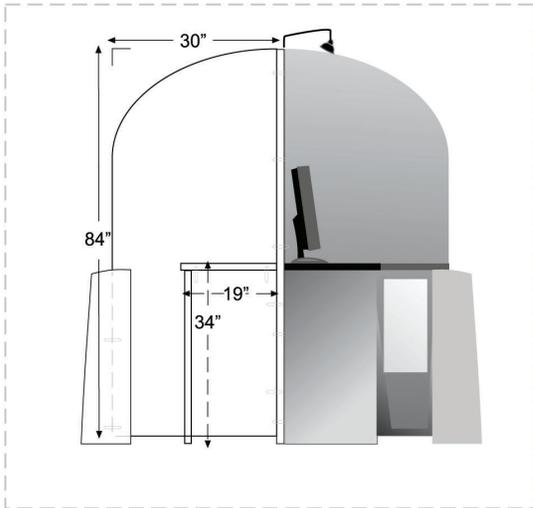
The road was never reopened. By 1954 the Mosier Twin Tunnels had been backfilled and abandoned.

Hatfield West Visitors Center



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INTERPRETIVE KIOSK: Oregon State Parks Hatfield West Visitors Center - Dimensional details and specifications.



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