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March 13, 2007

The Honorable Mary Margaret Haugen
Chair, Transportation Committee
Washington State Legislature
305 John A. Cherberg Bldg.
P.O. Box 40410
Olympia, WA 98504-0410

The Honorable Rick Metsger
Chair, Transportation Committee
Oregon State Legislature
900 Court St. NE, S-307
Salem, OR 97301

**SUBJECT: COLUMBIA RIVER CROSSING PROJECT
RESPONSE TO SHARON NASSET EMAIL DATED 3/9/07**

Dear Senators Haugen and Metsger:

This letter is in response to an email sent to both of you by Ms. Sharon Nasset, a Portland, Oregon resident, in regards to issues relating to process in developing the Columbia River Crossing project. Her lengthy email raised several issues that we synthesized into the three key issues below. Following are our responses.

1. Ms. Nasset expressed concerns about public involvement and citizen's ability to be heard and involved in the process.
 - a. Our public outreach for the Columbia River Crossing (CRC) project is unprecedented in scope and level of effort. CRC has hosted 11 open houses and more than a hundred neighborhood and community meetings to solicit input. Since December 1, 2006, project staff made presentations and gathered feedback at 52 neighborhood, government, business, and community meetings in Clark County and Portland. More than 1,500 people were engaged through these events. Promotional efforts during this time included 41,000 postcards mailed to zip codes in the project area, 10,000 newsletters, 6,900 email announcements, 13,000 notices inserted into local neighborhood association newsletters, and 1,300 flyers distributed within the project area.
 - b. We have had 19 Task Force meetings since February, 2005. Each meeting has included an opportunity for public comment. All members of the public that have

- signed up have been provided the opportunity to speak. In addition, materials that have been brought to the Task Force by members of the public, or that have been submitted to the project team with a request for distribution to the Task Force, have been promptly distributed. When appropriate, letters to the Task Force from citizens or interest groups have also been responded to by the CRC project team.
2. At the February 27 meeting of the Task Force, a subcommittee was selected to consider ideas for another potential project alternative to carry forward into the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS). Ms. Nasset has expressed concern about the subcommittee process, meeting notification, and meeting schedule.
 - a. The subcommittee does not constitute a quorum of the Task Force. Although no public testimony will be allowed at the subcommittee meetings, they will be open to the public. Interested citizens are encouraged to attend, observe, and submit written comments for the subcommittee's consideration. Comment forms are provided at the meetings and the CRC website is set up to receive public comment.
 - b. The meeting times and locations were posted on the project website and via email to persons on our project email list five days in advance of the first subcommittee meeting.
 - c. All of the scheduled meetings of the subcommittee are planned for a site within the project boundaries that is easily accessible to the public and the subcommittee members.
 - d. Meeting times were selected to maximize the participation of the subcommittee members.
 3. The CRC project has engaged working groups to address specific topics such as Freight Mobility, Community and Environmental Justice, Urban Design, and Bicycle/Pedestrian. Ms. Nasset contends these groups should follow criteria required by the Public Meeting Laws of Oregon and Washington that would allow public participation and access to meeting minutes and project data.
 - a. The CRC project routinely has multiple meetings each week involving a wide variety of project and local agency staff members and other interested parties. These working groups are not decision-making bodies and do not fall within the guidelines of the open meeting laws of either state.
 - b. We have responded to every request we have received for project information, whether that information was created by the various working groups or otherwise.

Ms. Nasset has been an active public participant in the CRC process. She has attended most if not all of the 19 Task Force meetings held to date and typically makes public presentations at the meetings as well as providing handouts of her proposals and suggestions. Ms. Nasset has proposed an alternative to those currently being recommended for further study in the DEIS. Her alternative was fairly reviewed and not recommended for further study.

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In addition, Ms. Nasset has requested information and data relating to the CRC project and process. CRC staff has provided timely responses to her questions and requests.

We believe the public process has been open and inclusive, and that the concerns and interests of citizens of both Washington and Oregon have been well represented in the feedback we have received through that process.

Sincerely,

John Osborn, Director
Oregon Department of Transportation

Doug Ficco, Director
Washington State Department of Transportation

JO:DF:pao

c: Project Controls