Columbia River CROSSING

News Release

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Technical analysis produces 115-116 foot clearance for I-5 replacement bridge

Refinement holds landside impacts to 95-110 foot levels

VANCOUVER –After substantial technical analysis of the impacts of an Interstate 5 bridge height between 100 and 125 feet, in five-foot increments, the Columbia River Crossing project has found that a bridge with a 115 foot vertical clearance reduces the number of vessels potentially impacted while minimizing additional community, environmental, freight and cost impacts. The technical analysis was prepared as part of the permit application to the U.S. Coast Guard, which must approve the bridge height.

The selected bridge height must balance the interests of river users, freight mobility, needs for flight paths over the bridge to Portland International Airport and Pearson Airfield, connections to downtown Vancouver, and cost and schedule of the project.

Out of the more than 2,600 commercial river users, nine to 11 may be affected at 115-116 feet. Discussions are still taking place with potentially affected users and property owners.

At 115 to 116 feet, transit and highway grades on I-5will increase slightly and traffic operational changes might be required. Bridge foundation sizes may increase, however, they are expected to remain consistent with the final environmental impact statement. Additional structure costs are estimated at about $30 million and are included in the current cost estimate. Mitigation costs for affected river users are not included.

Before the states of Oregon and Washington submit the bridge permit application to the U.S. Coast Guard, the U.S. Department of Transportation will evaluate whether the design refinement of a higher bridge will result in any new and significant impacts compared to those published in the draft and final environmental impact statements, and their record of decision published in 2011. If no new significant impacts are identified, then the conclusions in the environmental documents and federal record of decision remain valid. Additional significant impacts could result in the need for additional analysis.

Future steps in the bridge permit process include:

- Ongoing analysis to determine if vessel impacts can be further minimized with additional design refinements to add one or more feet in height
- Mitigation conversations with river users and property owners not accommodated by the refined bridge height
- Submittal of a bridge permit application to the U.S. Coast Guard in January

The states' goal is to receive a bridge permit in mid to late 2013. Bridge construction is scheduled for late 2014, provided funding is secured.

About the project

The Columbia River Crossing is a long-term, comprehensive project to reduce congestion, enhance mobility and improve safety on I-5 between SR 500 in Vancouver and Columbia Boulevard in Portland. The project will replace the I-5 bridge, extend light rail to Vancouver, improve closely-spaced interchanges, and enhance the pedestrian and bicycle path between the two cities. The Oregon and Washington state transportation departments are seeking construction funding from federal and state sources, as well as bridge user fees (tolls). Written comments may be submitted on the CRC project at any time at feedback@columbiarivercrossing.org. More information may be found on the CRC project Web site: http://www.columbiarivercrossing.org.

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