


**From:** [jen h](#)

**To:** [Draft EIS Feedback; Mayor Royce Pollard; Pat.Jollota@ci.vancouver.wa.us; Jeanne.Harris@ci.vancouver.wa.us; Jeanne.Stewart@ci.vancouver.wa.us; Tim.Leavitt@ci.vancouver.wa.us; Larry.Smith@ci.vancouver.wa.us; Pat.Campbell@ci.vancouver.wa.us;](#)

**CC:**

**Subject:** Fwd: Columbia River Crossing 

**Date:** Monday, May 05, 2008 10:06:12 AM

**Attachments:**

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Councilmembers Campbell, Smith, Leavitt, Stewart, Harris, Jollota, and Mayor Pollard;

I don't know why the Columbia River Crossing Task Force even bothers to pretend like they care about the public's wishes for this project. After reading the Columbian's latest article it is absolutely a waste of time to have public meetings to elicit feedback that none of our elected officials seem to want to listen to. You all have already decided that light rail is going to be rammed down our throats whether we like it or not. It doesn't matter what the citizens want because Vancouver absolutely has to have what Portland has—regardless of whether it is the right solution for us. What's next putting in a ridiculously expensive tram?

And now the wishes of Portland officials and others on the Oregon side of the river are more important than the needs, and wishes of your own citizens who will be footing much of the bill. I thought our mayor and city council all were supposed to be working for us—their constituents. In Portland they are adamant that a new bridge *must* carry light rail and they aren't going to do anything unless light rail is part of this project—sounds a bit like blackmail to me.

More than a year ago, Vancouver Mayor Royce Pollard said he wouldn't support a bridge unless it had light rail so why the

charade of exploring different ideas and solutions? Why are you all so threatened by the idea of pursuing other transit options? Because exploring differing viewpoints could jeopardize chances for the region to achieve consensus—and we all know consensus is so much more important to you all than actually finding the right solution for our transportation needs.

The cost savings for bus rapid transit over light rail is comparatively modest some say, an estimated \$89 million to \$176 million, in a project that could cost up to \$4.1 billion. Well you all don't worry too much about keeping costs low when it is taxpayers' money do you?! The truth is that light rails costs more to build and more to operate and is less flexible and less scalable than Bus Rapid Transit. I have found a lot of data from conducting my own research instead of just believing the biased garbage printed in the Columbian or available on the CRC Website.

Where costs are concerned there is some reliable data out there. The United States Government Accounting Office (GAO) did a study that found the following:

§ Light rail is 2.5 times as expensive to construct as bus rapid transit (BRT) in its most expensive configuration, exclusive bus freeway lanes (Figure).

§ Light rail is nearly four times as expensive to construct as bus lanes that also serve as high occupancy lanes.

§ Stunningly, that light rail is more than 50 times as expensive to construct as bus lanes on arterial streets. This is an important finding, because arterial bus lanes have great promise. Curitiba, Brazil has pioneered an arterial street bus lane system that carries at least six times the hourly volume of the best US light rail line.

§ In all configurations combined, light rail is 3.7 times as expensive as BRT to build

§ It is estimated that light rail operating and capital costs per passenger mile are \$3.16, nearly three times that of BRT at \$1.08

(<http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d01984.pdf>)

Proponents of light rail also claim that light rail produces slightly less air pollution. Unfortunately, that doesn't appear to be the case at all according to a recent Cato Institute study. In fact Cato senior fellow Randal O'Toole demonstrates that rail transit is "ineffective at reducing carbon dioxide emissions." The reason according to O'Toole is that, "While most rail transit uses less energy than buses, rail transit does not operate in a vacuum: transit agencies supplement it with extensive feeder bus operations," O'Toole writes.

Furthermore, "Those feeder buses tend to have low ridership, so they have high energy costs and greenhouse gas emissions per passenger mile. The result is that, when new transit lines open, the system as a whole can end up consuming more energy, per passenger mile, than it did before." ([http://www.terraily.com/reports/Rail\\_Transit\\_Poor\\_Choice\\_For\\_Reducing\\_Greenhouse\\_Gases\\_999.html](http://www.terraily.com/reports/Rail_Transit_Poor_Choice_For_Reducing_Greenhouse_Gases_999.html))

O'Toole also recommends in the study that "instead of pursuing costly rail projects, cities should look at proven alternatives. These include powering buses with alternative fuels, increasing the concentration of buses on heavily used routes, building new roads, implementing tolls, coordinating traffic signals, and encouraging drivers to purchase more fuel-efficient cars."

Spending a ton of money to do "studies" when you already made a decision is as ridiculous as holding public meetings to gather feedback that you don't use. You only seem to value data and feedback that supports light rail and the mindless sycophants at The Columbian are just as biased it would seem. I am not buying into this light rail frenzy and if you had any common sense you wouldn't either. Vancouver government apparently only works for Portland.

**Jennifer Hughes**