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MAY 21 2008

Columbia River Crossing



May 19, 2008

Columbia River Crossing  
c/o Heather Gundersen  
700 Washington Street, Suite 300  
Vancouver, WA 98660

Subject: Draft EIS comments for the Columbia River Crossing.

Dear Sirs,

Enclosed you will find my six pages of comments and testimony including modified diagrams so those comments are easier to visualize.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Terry Parker", written over a white rectangular area.

Terry Parker

xc: Steve Stuart, Clark County Commissioner  
Robert Liberty, Metro Counselor

# Testimony on the Draft Environmental Statement for the I-5 Columbia River Crossing Project by Terry Parker

From my prospective, none of the five alternatives meet reality check objectives that should be a part of this process.

**ALTERNATIVE 1**, the No-Build does not have enough capacity for either motor vehicles or transit in addition to lacking the safety requirements of a modern freeway.

**ALTERNATIVE 2**, the Replacement Crossing with Bus Rapid Transit, and **ALTERNATIVE 3**, Replacement Crossing with Light Rail both have too massive of a foot print, including across the river, and both are too expensive to construct.

**ALTERNATIVE 4**, the supplemental Crossing with Bus Rapid transit and **ALTERNATIVE 5**, the Supplemental Crossing with Light Rail both are nothing more than a sham of a middle ground option that appears to be designed for the purpose of politically eliminating any type of less costly options to compete with a big new bridge. Additionally, this alternative places too much emphasis on transit.

It is time to take the politics out of this project and come up with a reasonably cost effective reality check option that meets the needs of **ALL** of the users of the I-5 Columbia Crossing while seriously addressing the concept of not just recycling, but reusing the existing I-5 historical bridges.

## My Suggestion is as Follows

Clearly it is obvious a new I-5 Columbia River Crossing is needed for interstate highway mobility purposes and to meet the modern safety standards of a freeway. One of those safety standards is not to have a lift span that stops and backs up traffic, and is prone to causing crashes on an Interstate Highway. Therefore a new bridge **MUST** be constructed **for I-5 through traffic**. However this bridge only needs to have six full width full service lanes, three in each direction, with adequate shoulders along with other safety amenities if the current I-5 historical bridges are retained for local traffic and interchange purposes. Furthermore, retaining the current historical bridges uses less energy for construction than it does to completely replace them. Therefore, with the right modifications, retaining the historical bridges can be viewed as more eco-friendly.

While the newly constructed bridge would only carry through traffic with **NO HOV lanes**, the existing bridges would carry local motor vehicle traffic and interchange traffic in the following manner:

The current southbound bridge would carry all southbound motor vehicle traffic coming from the South side of Vancouver and SR-14 onto Hayden Island with an entrance to I-5 on the South side of Hayden Island. Traffic from Hayden Island proper would also use this same entrance ramp for going South on I-5.



Northbound traffic from I 5 headed for Hayden Island would exit I-5 on the South side of the island. Traffic going into to South Vancouver and SR-14.would use the same exit I-5 on the South side of Hayden Island and then use the existing northbound bridge. Traffic from Hayden Island headed to I-5 northbound would use a joint I-5 northbound entrance with traffic from SR-14 on the North side of the Columbia,

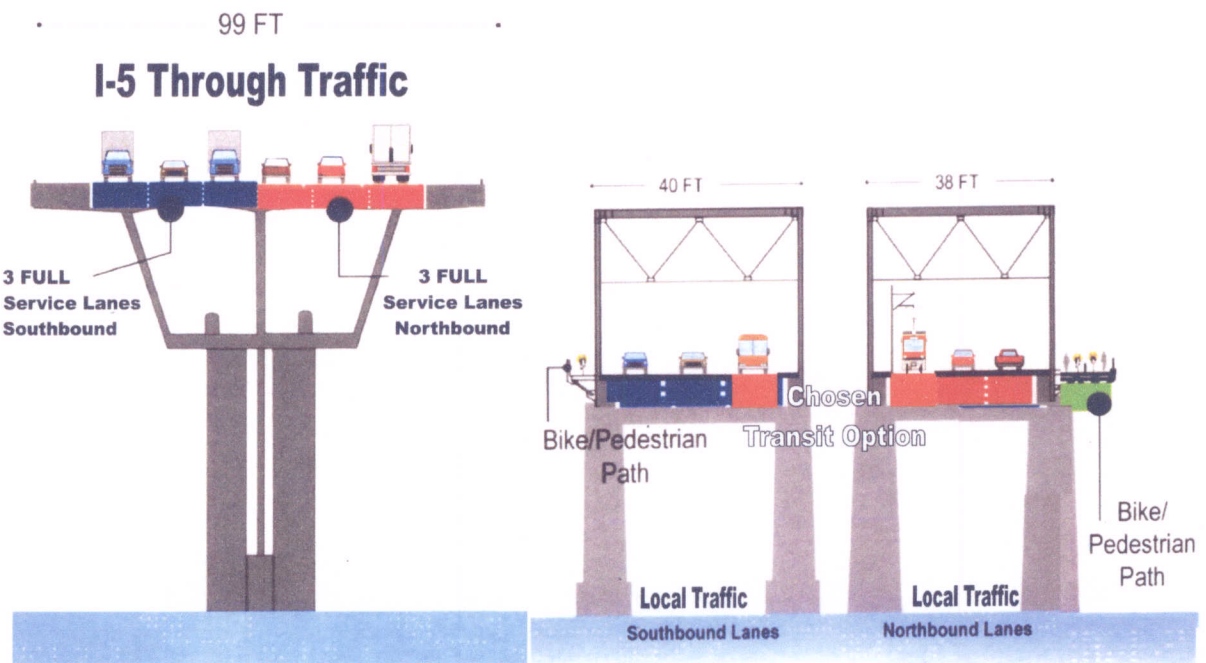
Since the speed limit on the existing bridges would be lowered and local traffic would move at a slower pace than the I-5 freeway traffic, many of the traffic safety concerns that exist today on the current bridges would be minimized.

On Hayden Island proper there would be a local frontage road to handle the interchange traffic crossing the island, and a signalized diamond intersection in the middle to handle traffic on and off Hayden Island itself.

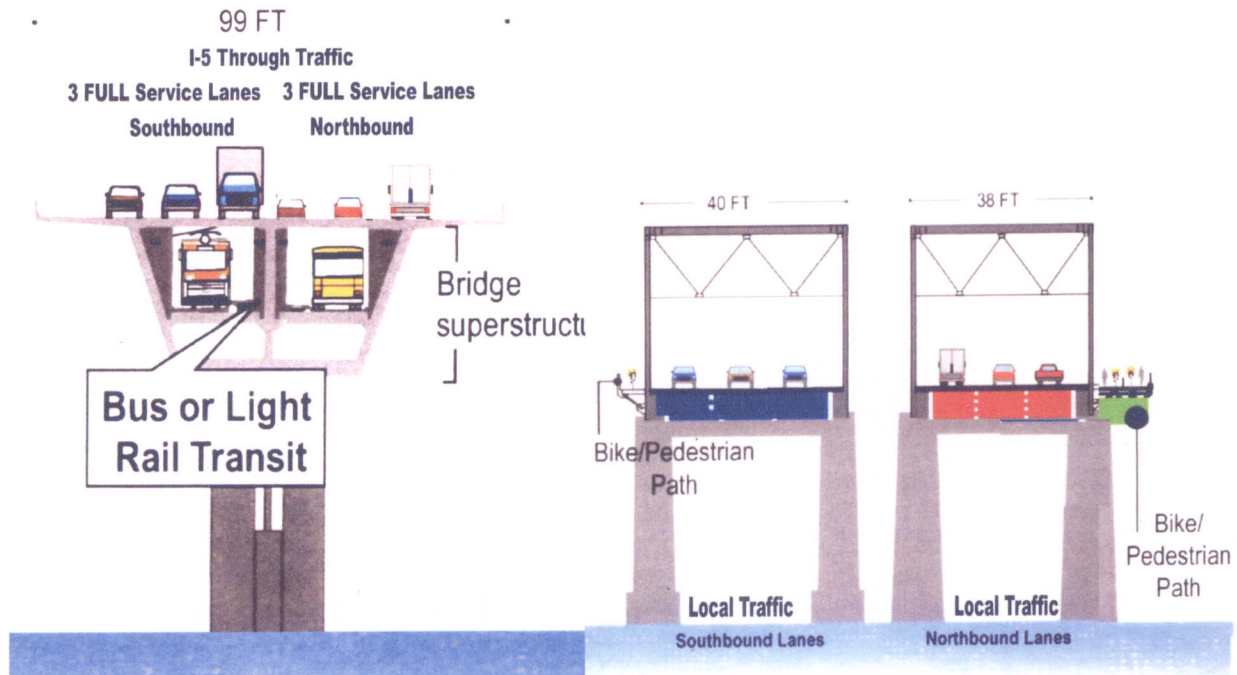
Sidewalks on the bridge(s) could be widened similar to what was done to the Hawthorne Bridge over the Willamette River in Portland for bicyclists and pedestrians.

Under this reuse scenario there are two possible alternatives for the chosen transit option to cross the Columbia.

**ALTERNATIVE A:** This alternative would have transit use one of the existing lanes on each of the existing bridges. The benefit here is that the chosen transit option would have a ground level landing on each end, not being up in the air, thereby making it safer for transit passengers and less costly to construct boarding platforms. Additionally by using the existing bridges for the chosen transit option, a lower construction cost along with less energy use for construction could probably be realized. The downside to having transit using the existing bridges is the lift spans. However, both Max and TriMet bus service that cross the Willamette River in Portland already deal with lift spans.



**ALTERNATIVE B:** This alternative could only be realized if the conceptual design of a stacked transit/highway bridge can be achieved. The positive aspects of such an option would allow for shared construction costs of the chosen transit option with a new six full service lane freeway bridge having no lift span. The downside of this option is the landing for transit at each end would be up in the air, safety for transit passengers could be compromised in that waiting areas would possibly be isolated, and the cost of construction for the boarding platforms, particularly if elevators and stairs are needed, would be significantly higher than ground level platforms.



**Under NO circumstances should there be a separate bridge structure constructed for the chosen transit option, bicycles and/or pedestrians.**

The existing crossing is a **historical landmark** that needs to be preserved.

With some seismic modifications and upgrading of the existing bridges including a wider sidewalk for a bicycle and pedestrian connection, by using the existing bridges for local and interchange traffic, by eliminating the northbound entrance ramp to I-5 and southbound exit ramp from I-5 that are currently directly on Hayden Island, and by **NOT** building a separate bridge for the chosen transit option, bicycles and pedestrians; the costs of the overall project could be significantly reduced thereby **COSTING the TAXPAYERS LESS MONEY!**

Furthermore, using the existing bridges for local and interchange traffic, bicycles and pedestrians, and possibly transit, lessens the construction disruption as compared to total replacement, lessens the amount of energy needed for construction, **lessens the footprint of the project**, lessens the negative eco-effects of the project, adds to the green effect of the project and preserves a historical structure - all of which equate to a **SAVINGS for TAXPAYERS** while still building a workable project that will meet the needs of the region.

**These logical and cost savings re-use options MUST be fully considered!**



## Potential Bridge Tolls and Cost Sharing

Once gain, when it comes to tolling, it is time to take all the politics out and establish a reality check option that meets the needs of **ALL** of the users and **ALL** of the vehicle modes of transport. **“If” tolling is implemented for any kind of motor vehicles, then the users of ALL modes of vehicular traffic, including transit passengers and bicyclists, MUST be required to pay a toll or a user charge.** Anything less is socialistic policy making that has no place in a democratic society and smacks of discrimination. With the users of various vehicular transport modes sharing the crossing, then the users of **ALL** vehicular transport modes must share in the financial responsibility.

**Taxpayer subsidies for any transit option and/or infrastructure must NOT come from motorist paid tolls. Transit user tolls or surcharges on transit fares need to be mandated** to help pay the local match moneys for any transit infrastructure, a proportionate share of the bridge superstructure costs and any upgrades associated with transit related to the Columbia River Crossing project

Bicyclists too must pay their own way with a toll to cover any local match monies spent on the specialized infrastructure to accommodate them, including a proportionate share of bridge superstructure costs. If it is not cost effective to provide bicycle infrastructure and/or improved bicycle infrastructure as part of the crossing project due to inaccurate and/or non-existent projected counts based on an accurate count of the current number of bicyclists using the crossing, then any policy of providing bicycle infrastructure must be revisited in favor of not fleecing taxpayers. A per bicycle trip cost analysis based on the financial costs to provide bicycle infrastructure must be taken into consideration before any decision is made. **Any tolls that are imposed on motorists MUST NOT be used to subsidize and/or pay for bicycle infrastructure.**

Moreover, there should be **NO** consideration of what is commonly called congestion pricing where at certain times of the day the cost is higher to use the crossing. This too is discrimination in that most people can not choose their own hours of employment. You do not see local or regional governments allowing or making requests to employees they come in a couple of hours earlier in the morning or leave a couple of hours later in the evening to reduce rush hour congestion. Democratic governments are supposed to be the servants of the people accommodating citizen needs, not dictating to the people like an elitist ruler.



## HOV Lanes - Not

HOV lanes **DO NOT** work well in this corridor. They simply create more congestion and gum up the rest of the travel lanes with stop and go traffic. Vehicles crossing over the full service lanes from the HOV lane to use an exit ramp, and vehicles crossing over to the HOV lane from an entrance ramp create a significant negative impact on the other lanes of traffic. Large tractor trailer motor freight rigs take considerably longer that to get momentum again after stopping than do cars and light trucks. These big rigs would have to do it less often and would conserve more fuel if it were not for the crossing over of other vehicles to and from the HOV lanes. The crossover traffic to and from the HOV lanes also undoubtedly adds to the number of crashes in the corridor thereby making the existence of any restricted HOV lane a higher safety risk for all freeway users.

The HOV lanes are far more of a political mindset statement and dictatorial restriction that cater to the special interests than they are a workable policy in this corridor. .

Therefore, for all of the afore mention reasons, **all existing HOV designated travel lanes need to be returned to full service usage status with NO new HOV lanes created.**

## Political Mindsets and Special Interests

Political mindsets and special interest agendas have meddled in, hindered, attempted to change the direction and alter the focus of this project for which the primary objective, stated or not, is to cost effectively meet the regional needs of transport based economy, meet the needs of an Interstate Highway System, and meet the needs of a local river crossing for **ALL** users. Alternatives one through five all are lacking in one or more of these aspects. The no-build is capacity deficient. The big bridge simply too massive and expensive. The supplemental bridge as developed by the ad-hock middle ground sub-committee is a pointless folly designed to be a failure as proposed; and the transit component is too much of a dictatorial mandate while the motorist only tolling/congestion pricing concept is a discriminatory tax hike aimed straight at the pocket books of working middle class that will negatively affect mainstream household incomes, and therefore negatively impact the local economy. There is and has been absolutely far too much discussion involving political and special interest agendas about ways this project can dictate the travel and mode choices people make. Now it is time for logic, common sense and democracy to intervene by providing a reality check to the mayhem, setting aside this discussion of controlling choice and getting back to developing an impartial, unbiased and balanced plan that accommodates and treats all users **EQUALLY** regardless of mode choice.

Furthermore, it must be the voters of Vancouver and Clark County Washington that decide if they want light rail running through the communities on their side of the river, not the transit authoritarians, Oregonians or even Oregon politicians. The decision is for Washington residents alone, and whatever that decision is, it must not stop or block an upgraded Columbia River Crossing for I-5 and local motor vehicle traffic from being constructed.

### In Conclusion

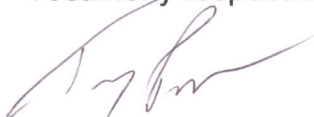
The final chosen project must be one that that brings the two sides of the river closer together, not farther apart with motorist only tolls.

Retaining what is already in place, the existing historical bridges, as part of the project is both less costly and less eco-damaging from a construction standpoint as compared to completely replacing them.

The final chosen project must provide for a just and equitable financing package for local match monies whereby: **“IF” there is any kind of user charge for the crossing, then the users of ALL vehicular modes of transport must be proportionately charged.**

And finally, the final preferred chosen project **MUST insure that ALL users are equally accommodated and planned for without political, financial, discriminatory or any other kind of bias, be it personal choice of transport mode or otherwise.**

Testimony respectfully submitted,



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