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## ESTHER SHORT NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION

## Columbia River Crossing

June 6, 2008

Columbia River Crossing  
700 Washington St. #300  
Vancouver, WA. 98660

James Correll, Chair  
Downtown Appearance and Projects Committee  
Esther Short Neighborhood Association  
400 W. 8<sup>th</sup> Street Suite 322  
Vancouver, WA. 98660

**Subject: Columbia River Crossing  
Draft Environmental Impact Statement Review  
Conclusions, Recommendations and Conditions**

The Downtown Appearance and Projects committee of the Esther Short Neighborhood Association has completed its review of the Draft EIS and Section 4(f) Evaluation for the Columbia River Crossing Project.

Based on our review and ongoing participation in the CRC community outreach process, we hereby recommend selection of Alternative 3 (replacement bridge with light rail) as the preferred alternative. We also recommend that the light rail alignment be confined to the Washington Street R/W extending north to McLoughlin and then east within the McLoughlin R/W across I-5 terminating at Clark College.

The detailed rationale that places these recommendations in context is presented in the attachment entitled Conclusions, Recommendations and Conditions Regarding CRC Draft Environmental Impact Statement. We would particularly like to draw your attention to the "Conditions" associated with the recommendations. Without these conditions, the selected alternative becomes invalid.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this extremely important project. Given the obvious and significant impacts that the project will impose on our neighborhood, it is essential that planning, design, and funding considerations continue to include our direct involvement.

Regards,



Jim Correll

Chair, Downtown Appearance and Projects Committee  
Esther Short Neighborhood Association

Attachment: Conclusions, Recommendations and Conditions Regarding CRC Draft Environmental Impact Statement

Cc: Pat McDonnell, City Manager  
ESNA board of directors  
ESNA committee chairs  
DAP committee members

Esther Short Neighborhood Association  
Downtown Appearance and Projects Committee  
**Conclusions, Recommendations and Conditions**  
**Regarding**  
**CRC Draft Environmental Impact Statement**  
June 19,2008

For the past eight months members of the ESNA Downtown Appearance and Projects (DAP) committee have participated in multiple Columbia River Crossing (CRC) workshops, attended several neighborhood forums, reviewed extensive CRC project documentation, attended the Southwest Washington Regional Transportation Council's (SWRTC) county-wide high capacity rapid transit planning open house and reviewed the agency's draft plan.

Since the May 2<sup>nd</sup> release of the DEIS, our DAP committee has been involved in reviewing this document and our members have attended community open houses and informational meetings that have been held by the CRC project team in our community.

At our May 15, 2008 neighborhood association meeting, the Esther Short Neighborhood Association facilitated a panel discussion in which experts from the CRC Project, Tri-Met, C-Tran, SWRTC and the City of Vancouver responded to numerous questions from our membership regarding the various facilities being considered.

Based on the information gained in this process, the DAP Committee has formulated the following Conclusions, Recommendations and Conditions regarding the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for the CRC project:

### **Primary Conclusions**

- Bridge
  1. The two existing I-5 Bridges between Vancouver and Portland are functionally and structurally obsolete.
  2. Addition of a new I-5 Bridge, located either upstream of I-205 or downstream of the existing I-5 Bridges near the Burlington Northern Santa Fe railroad bridge, would not relieve either the current or the projected traffic congestion.
  3. Replacement of the existing I-5 Bridges with a new modern structure would be more cost-effective than restoration and expansion of the old existing bridge structures.
- High Capacity Rapid Transit (HCRT) - Mode
  1. Long-term future dependence on single occupancy commuter vehicles would be economically unjustifiable and environmentally irresponsible.
  2. HCRT commuter service between Vancouver and Portland is essential to the future economic vitality of Clark County, the City of Vancouver and the Esther Short Neighborhood.

3. The future long-term operations and maintenance of bus rapid transit would be substantially more costly than light rail, especially when considering the rapidly increasing costs for hydrocarbon-based fuels.
  4. Portland and Tri-Met have currently and for 20 years successfully utilized light rail as the preferred mode of commuter rapid transit.
  5. Tri-Met has more expertise and experience designing, constructing, operating and maintaining light rail rapid transit systems than any other public agency in the US; whereas C-Tran has none.
  6. Light rail can be either a benefit or a detriment to the neighborhoods that it traverses, depending directly on the selected alignment and on the details of the facilities design, construction and operation.
- High Capacity Rapid Transit (HCRT) - Alignment
    1. The HCRT network, currently being planned by the Southwest Washington Regional Transportation Council to serve Clark County, will radiate eastward from I-5 along SR 14, Mill Plain, and Fourth Plain as well as north along the east side of I-5.
    2. The CRC HCRT system that is ultimately selected must be compatible and interface smoothly with the planned Clark County system.
    3. Several alternative routes through downtown Vancouver are depicted in the DEIS.
      - ◆ Washington Street in downtown Vancouver has more north-south right-of-way width and more compatible adjacent land use for light rail than does Broadway Street.
      - ◆ McLoughlin Street in downtown Vancouver has more east-west right-of-way width and more compatible adjacent land use for light rail than does 16<sup>th</sup> Street. Additionally, McLoughlin Street already includes an I-5 under crossing and 16<sup>th</sup> Street does not.
  - Connectivity & Funding
    1. The existing I-5 corridor physically isolates downtown Vancouver from the rest of the City. The CRC project presents an excellent opportunity to re-connect downtown Vancouver, south along Main Street to the Columbia River waterfront and east at several locations into the Historic Reserve.
    2. Funding for long-term operations and maintenance of the completed Columbia River Crossing project facilities, as with all public transportation systems, will require some method(s) of public subsidy.
    3. Tolling is an appropriate funding method to offset a portion of the capital as well as the operations and maintenance costs, when it is used as an integral part of a comprehensive financial program.
    4. Tolling can be an effective way to help manage traffic congestion when it is used as an integral part of an intermodal transportation system.
    5. There is a potential risk that acquisition of funding for operations and maintenance of the high capacity rapid transit component of the CRC project could be allocated

disproportionately to those located closest to transit stations rather than being equitably apportioned among all beneficiaries.

## Recommendations

Based on the foregoing conclusions, the Esther Short Neighborhood Association DAP committee recommends the following:

1. Select I-5 bridge replacement, Alternative 3, as the preferred DEIS alternative.
2. Select light rail, Alternative 3, as the preferred DEIS mode of high capacity rapid transit.
3. Select the light rail route option that extends two-way within the Washington Street right-of-way, north to McLoughlin Street, then east within the McLoughlin right-of-way across I-5 terminating at Clark College.

## Conditions

The foregoing recommendations are based on the following conditions:

1. A formal written agreement must be established between C-Tran, Tri-Met, Portland Metro, SWRTC, the City of Vancouver, and the two state Departments of Transportation:
  - ◆ clearly establishing the management structure for implementation, operations and maintenance of the facilities,
  - ◆ clearly defining the specific responsibilities of each of the respective agencies within the management structure, and
  - ◆ ensuring that Tri-Met is a direct participant in the design, construction, and initial operations and maintenance of the proposed light rail system.
2. Provisions must be included in the project to re-establish downtown connectivity south to the Columbia River waterfront and east into the Historic Reserve.
3. Provisions must be included in the project to identify, schedule and implement mitigation measures for any negative impacts anticipated to result to downtown businesses, residences and public agencies from construction and/or operation of the proposed facilities.
4. Funding mechanism(s), acceptable to the impacted businesses, residences and public agencies, must be established ensuring that the future cost of system operations and maintenance is equitably shared by ALL beneficiaries.
5. A "detailed financial plan" must be prepared and published that:
  - ◆ quantifies all realistic sources of funding, both public and private, for each phase of project implementation, operations and maintenance and
  - ◆ establishes a system for rigorously managing project expenditures and public and private revenues in accordance with the financial plan.