



From: [Margaret Wade](#)
To: [Columbia River Crossing](#);
CC:
Subject: Comment on proposed Columbia River Crossing options
Date: Wednesday, June 11, 2008 4:50:19 PM
Attachments:

Since April 2006, I have commuted every weekday during rush hour from my home in Southeast Portland to my current workplace in downtown Vancouver by a combination of Tri-Met route 14 and the C-TRAN 105 Express. I consider myself to be a citizen of both Vancouver and Portland because I spend significant time in both communities and because of the nature of my work, which includes community relations and working with nonprofit partners on both sides of the river.

I would like to comment primarily on the public transportation issues involved in the Columbia River Crossing project. I believe that better public/alternative transportation options--combined with an aggressive, creative regional campaign to inform the public about these options and increase ridership--are a necessary part of any solution to I-5 traffic issues.

Among Oregon stakeholders the preferred public transportation option appears to focus primarily on extension of light rail to SW Washington, whether via a modified existing bridge, a supplemental bridge or a replacement. In general I believe MAX is an excellent public transport system. However, but it does not serve the needs of all public transportation users in the region and I have significant doubts about whether light rail is a panacea or indeed the best public transport option between Portland and Clark County. I STRONGLY URGE decision-makers not to make light rail the sole or predominant public transportation option for the Columbia River Crossing Project for the following reasons:

1) Commute time: because of the route of the MAX Yellow Line and its relatively slow speed and frequent stops, the proposed extension of light rail between Expo Center and Vancouver would potentially create a longer commute time for commuters between downtown Portland and Vancouver than the existing C-TRAN express bus system. I think that many riders who currently choose to use the express buses would continue to prefer paying higher fares for some form of reliable, fast direct bus transportation rather than commute by MAX.

My personal perspective: Based on current C-TRAN and Tri- Met schedules and the information available in the Columbia River Crossing Draft EIS, I estimate that my commute between downtown Portland and downtown Vancouver in the morning would increase to 33-34 minutes via MAX from 15 minutes via the 105 Express:

Walk between Tri-Met bus stop and MAX station:	2 minutes
Yellow Line MAX to Expo Center station (current schedule):	26 minutes
Light rail from Expo Center to Broadway & Evergreen (approx):	<u>5-6 minutes</u>
Total one-way commute time:	33-34 minutes

When this time is added to the approximately 25 minutes of travel and wait time from my home to a transfer point to the Yellow Line (via either bus to Hollywood MAX or bus to downtown Portland), it would take me a full hour to travel 11 miles in the morning, instead of the current 35-40 minutes..

Based on current schedules my total commute time in the evening would only be slightly longer by light rail than by the current express bus route. However, given my tight schedule--particularly in the morning--demanding professional job, and busy lifestyle, adding 20-25 minutes to my morning commute would be enough to discourage me from taking public transportation.

2) Safety/quality of ride experience concerns on light rail: until current perceived and real problems with safety and the quality of rider experience on existing MAX routes are dealt with successfully, in my opinion many drivers, particularly those in Clark County who are not familiar with the system, may be reluctant to switch to commuting by MAX. In particular, Tri-Met needs to address the systemic problem of non-paying riders and lack of security on the trains.

My personal perspective: I experimented with commuting between downtown Portland and Delta Park via the MAX Yellow Line, then transferring to either the C-TRAN #4 or #44, on a daily basis for about 3 months between November 2007 and February 2008. I had the following experiences on the light rail portion of my trip between the

hours of 5:30-6:30 p.m. (rush hour) during that three-month period:

- 1) On one occasion I was touched inappropriately/groped by a person who put his fingers in the gap between the bottom and back of the seat in the upper part of a MAX car in which I was sitting
- 2) On two other occasions men tried to start unsolicited, unwanted conversations by sharing inappropriate personal information and asking me intrusive personal questions
- 3) I witnessed an incident of unprovoked, prolonged verbal aggression toward other passengers, including several teenagers, by an extremely intoxicated woman that lasted approximately 10-15 minutes
- 4) I never saw fare inspectors or security personnel on any of the Yellow Line MAX trains during rush hour during that 3 month period

I did not feel that my safety was actually threatened while riding MAX and would not describe myself as overly concerned about my personal safety in general. However, when combined with increased average commute time these experiences were frequent enough and unpleasant enough that I decided that MAX was not a good alternative to the C-TRAN 105 Express.

If the adopted Columbia River Crossing plan results in significant reduction or elimination of C-TRAN express routes or other forms of direct bus service, I most likely would drive or find another job instead of commuting between Portland and Vancouver via MAX.

I would also like to comment that overall, I am discouraged that the project scope and public discussion has been limited to the I-5 bridge/Columbia River Crossing. In my experience of riding C-TRAN daily between downtown Portland and downtown Vancouver, the existing I-5 bridge is the least significant of the I-5 traffic bottlenecks on most days. Far worse in terms of daily congestion is the section of I-5 further south from the I-405 interchange to the I-84 interchange. Although my personal experience is as a "reverse commuter," my observation is that these bottlenecks appear to be equally severe for the larger number of commuters who travel south to Portland in the morning and north to Southwest Washington in the evening.

Unless I-5 issues further south—which appear to pose some difficult engineering challenges because of the current placement of interchanges/overpasses as well as lack of land for amelioration or expansion of the existing roadway—are addressed, I do not think an upgrade of the bridge, no matter what form it takes, is going to reduce traffic problems along the I-5 corridor in any significant way. I do support tolls on the I-5 bridge and the Glenn Jackson bridge. Tolls, along with increased gas prices, seem to be one of the few viable tools for changing driver behavior and limiting the growth of number of vehicles on the road overall.

I believe that what is truly needed is not a Columbia River Crossing Project but a holistic approach to traffic problems along the I-5 corridor that adequately addresses future population growth, the impact of peak oil, environmental concerns, and the cultural shift necessary to get more people to use public transportation. I think that for the future, both Southwest Washington and Oregon would be best served by a faster, more convenient and better-integrated public transportation system that serves the different needs of people throughout the region with a variety of options that provide easier access to transportation hubs and corridors for pedestrians and cyclists. In my opinion the public conversation thus far seems to me to be too narrowly focused on "either-or" choices and an overly limited vision, and is too limited in terms of geographic scope to address the greater complexity of public transportation challenges for commuters along the I-5 corridor.

One last comment: it's great that this project has solicited public comment through a variety of forums, but I wonder whether the comments you are receiving adequately reflect the views and experiences of those most affected by the proposed public transportation options? As far as I know, neither Tri-Met nor C-TRAN riders on the relevant bus and MAX routes between Portland and Vancouver appear to have been systematically surveyed for their opinions. It seems to me that such a survey would be relatively easy to do. The cost would be negligible compared with the cost of an actual bridge upgrade or replacement, and the compiled information invaluable in gaining a more comprehensive view of the concerns of the core group of existing public transportation riders.

Sincerely,
Margaret Wade

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