

June 18, 2008

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




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Columbia River Crossing

Subject: Marine Drive Interchange/Portland Expo Center
 Ref: DEIS – Ch.2, Pg.26

Dear Ms. Gunderson, CRC project staff and CRC Task Force Members:

As the governing board of the Northwest Agricultural Show, we would like to add  the proposed options being considered for the Marine Drive Interchange and the possible impact to the Portland Expo Center.

The Northwest Ag Show is preparing for its 40th Anniversary show in 2009; for 32 of those years, we have been at the Portland Expo Center. Over the course of those years, we have been approached by several other venues and organizations wanting to move our show to a location outside of Portland. Each time the option was presented, it was inevitably discarded due mainly to the size of our show and the time of year it is held. The Expo Center is, quite simply, the only venue large enough for our entire show to be held inside; a necessity when held in January. We represent over 200 agricultural vendors who consider this area to be an annual stop on their trade show circuit. And, because of the central location, we draw attendees from all along the I-5 corridor; as far north as Canada and south into California. Because we have thousands of exhibitors and attendees traveling to our show, we work with several hotels and restaurants in the Expo Center's immediate area to accommodate them.

Upon reviewing the available material detailing the proposed changes to the Marine Drive Interchange, we strongly oppose both the Diagonal & Southern Alignment options. The apparent change to traffic patterns and access to the site would have a direct effect on our attendance numbers. Our main difficulty in getting our agricultural attendees to the show is their resistance to driving through the metropolitan area. Any additional restriction and/or complication of the area will make it that much harder for our show to draw in attendees. Also, the possible loss of building space and parking lot area would severely hinder our show's ability to be competitive with other trade shows. As stated earlier in this letter, we are not able to move our show, in its entirety, to another venue; loss of building space may cause us to restrict our show size, making us, and the Metro area, a less viable stop on the agricultural trade show circuit. Conversely, the Standard/Current option for the interchange would make this new construction a seamless and positive addition to the Expo Center and the surrounding area. We support the Standard/Current option and urge you to consider the many shows/events that bring economic stimulus to the Expo Center and its surrounding areas each year.

Sincerely,

Polly Owen, Jeff Rumpca, Dan Keeley, Tim Newkirk, Aimee McAuliffe, Dan Wells, Dan Klupenger, Mary Louise VanNatta, Mickey Hatley, Mark Willmes, Preston Henry

The Northwest Horticultural Congress

James Heater
Show Manager

Amy Patrick
Assistant Show Manager

Cc: Chris Bailey, Director – Portland Expo Center