CLACKAMAS COUNTY

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

PUBLIC SERVICES BUILDING
2051 KAEN ROAD | OREGON CITY, OR 97045

Columbia River Crossing Task Force
700 Washington Street Suite 300
Vancouver, WA 98660

June 30, 2008

Dear Columbia River Crossing Task Force,

Clackamas County appreciates the opportunity to provide public comment on the Columbia River Crossing Project. While we are not one of the sponsoring agencies, as an affected regional partner, we have been monitoring the EIS process for this complex project. The comments we offer below are intended to ensure that the eight partner agencies that will be making critical decisions regarding this project in the future will have information about how we believe the Columbia River Crossing Project could impact our county residents and businesses, and to highlight key issues that we urge you to thoroughly consider as this project moves forward.

First, we are keenly aware of the challenges in the I-5 transportation network, in both highway and transit aspects. As home to the Clackamas Industrial Area which contains some of the state's largest distribution companies, we also appreciate of the value of freight movement and our region's important economic role as an international trade hub. In addition, we also feel strongly that any new highway projects must reflect our region's policy commitment to reduced greenhouse gas emissions, travel demand management, and reduction of vehicle miles traveled.

We offer our support for the LPA recommended by the CRC Task force on June 24, 2008, a replacement bridge with three lanes northbound and southbound, with light rail. We understand that a new bridge is the best, though possibly most difficult solution to address the purpose and need of the project. This is the most critical hotspot in our regional highway system and a major investment must be made to bring it to an appropriate standard for the traffic it must serve.

Notwithstanding our support, we must urge that a larger view of the highway system should be more seriously considered in future stages of project development. Clear impacts on the I-205 are evident from your own limited analysis of travel demand and diversion; therefore it is critical that investments in this part of the system must be considered in parallel with the improvements to the Columbia River Crossing. As a whole, the system has a collective amount of capacity and it should be managed and distributed optimally. Further analysis must evaluate more broadly the impacts to the geographic area including I-205 further south than the current study area.

More specifically, we believe that tolls should be instituted on the I-205 Bridge concurrent with tolling on the new I-5 Bridge, in order to ensure that a funding source can be utilized to make needed investments throughout the regional north-south highway system. We can not afford to

inhibit one integral part of the highway system while focusing on another, particularly if the improvements simply redistribute congestion problems from one area of the region to another.

Additionally, we believe that tolling as a traffic demand management tool is appropriate on both bridges. If tolls on an I-5 Bridge are expected to influence travel demand, it is appropriate to capture the similar demand that exists, and would be created by diversion, on the I-205 Bridge, a few miles away. Further, in seeking new funding tools for the I-5 Bridge, it would seem to make sense to maximize tolling as a funding source while also dedicating it toward making corresponding, balanced improvements on the I-205 system for maximum system benefit.

Though this would certainly mean that Clackamas County businesses and residents would be impacted by these tolls, we would expect that they, along with the rest of the region, would also benefit from an integrated highway system that allows a more reliable flow of freight, manageable auto commuting patterns, and broader transit options. This could be a realistic option if the tolls collected on I-205 were used to benefit the users who would pay them. Together with the planned I-5 improvements, this would produce a far more reliable, multimodal, and manageable highway system in the region for decades to come, even with planned growth in both Oregon and Washington.

While Clackamas County is not considered a directly impacted jurisdiction in the Columbia River Crossing process, the decisions made regarding the CRC will certainly have direct and significant impacts on our businesses and our commuters. Additionally, we make many transportation investment decisions regionally, and decisions made regarding funding of this project have a direct impact on funding decisions made on any other project of regional significance. While it is clear that we support innovative funding models to help projects like the CRC progress, we also believe that regional equity is also critical to the future success of major transportation projects like this one. Acknowledgement that this project will create increased demand and congestion on other parts of the highway system is essential, and must lead to a finance plan that balances revenue generation, demand management, and regional equity.

We are committed to working with all of our partners to address our region's transportation challenges and maximize our opportunities. The Columbia River Crossing presents both challenges and opportunities, and we commend your efforts to work through the wide range of complex issues. The Clackamas County Board of Commissioners will continue to watch closely and provide our input regularly as progress on this important project continues.

Sincerely,

Lynn Peterson
Chair

Bill Kennemer
Commissioner

Martha Schrader
Commissioner

BCC/eg/kjb