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July 1, 2008



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Columbia River Crossing

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

RE: Interstate 5 Columbia River Crossing Project, Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS)

Dear Ms. Gundersen:

The Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association (AOPA), representing more than 413,000 pilots nationwide, approximately 19,000 of whom reside in Oregon and Washington states, provides the following comments on the I-5 Columbia River Crossing project draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS). AOPA appreciates the comprehensive analysis and impacts on aviation that were included in the DEIS. Based on the improved aviation safety and efficiency that would be gained at Pearson Field under the replacement crossing alternatives, AOPA supports alternatives 2 and 3 that would not require lift towers.

#### **Importance of Pearson Field**

Vancouver's Pearson Field is one of the nation's oldest operating airfields and remains a busy general aviation airport servicing southwest Washington and Portland pilots. Pearson Field is home to 175 based aircraft and more than 53,000 operations annually. The airport contributes about 600 jobs to the Vancouver area and salaries drawn in relation to business at Pearson total about \$11 million. The total economic activity related to Pearson totals about \$38 million.

#### **Replacement Crossing Alternatives Benefit Pearson Field**

AOPA is encouraged that the project sponsors have thoroughly evaluated the benefits and effects of the Interstate 5 Columbia River crossing project design alternatives on aviation and nearby Pearson Field. Based on our review, alternatives 2 and 3 would have aviation operational and safety benefits based on the elimination of the lift towers that exist today. The elimination of the lift towers would result in the reduction in the departure climb gradient from 650 feet per nautical mile to 275 feet per nautical - a significant reduction resulting in enhanced safety benefits for airport operations.

As stated in the DEIS, an important goal of the project is to minimize hazards of the crossing to air navigation from Pearson Field. AOPA strongly supports this goal and encourages the project sponsors to select one of the replacement crossing alternatives that would ultimately benefit Pearson Field.

Sincerely,

Heidi J Williams  
Senior Director, Airports