

From: fredtrain@aol.com
To: [Draft EIS Feedback;](#)
CC:
Subject: Fwd: AORTA DEIS Comments (Part 2 of 2)
Date: Tuesday, July 01, 2008 11:53:04 PM
Attachments: [AORTA-DEISComments.doc](#)



***** IMPORTANT ! *****

The content of this email was found to contain potentially hostile or malicious content. For your protection, eSafes Content Security Server has modified this email and removed the dangerous content.

\Zipped AORTA CRC DEIS Documents.zip\Supporting Documents/23USC129-Sec.129-TollsFromVlex.com.html Msg #723 - Multiple extensions are prohibited (Supporting Documents/23USC129-Sec.129-TollsFromVlex.com.html) - File Blocked.

Dear Ms. Gundersen,

Attached is AORTA's detailed responses to the DEIS document

Fred Nussbaum, Strategic Planner
 Association of Oregon Rail and Transit Advocates
 Temporary phone: 503-936-6792

-----Original Message-----

From: fredtrain@aol.com
 To: DraftEISfeedback@columbiarivercrossing.org
 Sent: Tue, 1 Jul 2008 5:29 pm
 Subject: AORTA DEIS Comments (Part 1 of 2)

Dear Ms. Gundersen,

Attached are files of AORTA correspondence and supporting documents that we would like included in the DEIS record. A cover memo is included below and with the attachment.

A CD with the same was also sent by US Mail this afternoon.

I will be emailing a document with detailed responses to the DEIS document later this evening before the midnight deadline.

Sincerely,

Fred Nussbaum, Strategic Planner
 Association of Oregon Rail and Transit Advocates
 Temporary phone: 503-936-6792

(AORTA Letterhead)

AORTA's Comments on the CRC DEIS

Biased Process

Staff showed its persistent bias toward a replacement bridge when, at the 11/21/06 Task Force Meeting, it had prepared a slick 14 page PR brochure **Staff Recommendation for the Range of Alternatives to Advance for Further Analysis in the Columbia River Crossing Draft Environmental Impact Statement** that recommended one Replacement Bridge option with two transit flavors. The Task Force had not yet received the "Considerations ..." memo (p.44), the "Jim Howell Proposal" memo (p.82) or the final alternatives evaluation summarized in the PPT show on (p. 213).

Inflated Definition of Need

Projected traffic increases unrealistic. Inasmuch as this inflated growth was used as a yardstick to reject viable alternatives because they did not provide allegedly sufficient freeway capacity, the DEIS must revisit those alternatives and reevaluate them on the basis of more realistic projections. In particular, CRC must revisit the multimodal, non-freeway supplemental bridge option (aka R-19, R-22 or Alternative 3), which was faulted for not reducing enough traffic or providing enough new capacity on I-5.

Biased Treatment of Alternatives

The multimodal, non-freeway supplemental bridge option **AORTA** proposed was also faulted for not meeting the traffic safety concerns surrounding the existing I-5 bridges. Staff ignored the freeway safety improvements resulting from 1) greatly simplifying the Hayden Island ramps and 2) replacement of the substandard, short SR-14 to I-5 south ramp with a long merge ramp using the supplementary bridge. More realistic traffic projections would also reduce the safety issues.

This critique also applies to the treatment of several other non-freeway supplemental bridge proposals.

Biased Treatment of Alternatives

The multimodal, non-freeway supplemental bridge options were also faulted for not meeting the seismic concerns surrounding the existing I-5 bridges. Nothing prevented that package from being expanded to include seismic upgrade of those bridges.

Not a True Multimodal Approach

As the alternatives analysis consistently ignored the proposals to include relatively low-cost modifications of the railroad bridge, which had been clearly and repeatedly demonstrated to remove most of the I-5 bridge lift issues, improve freight and passenger rail operations and eliminate the navigation hazards for barges. All evidence points to staff simply refusing to address this component, probably because they did not consider the railroad bridge very relevant to their freeway/HCT project, even though it is well within the BIA) there is no question that the BNSF mainline operates in the I-5 corridor and that huge volumes of freight and significant numbers of people are moved by trains on that mainline. (See also CRC treatment of TR-11 – Commuter Rail and discussions of freight rail).

Improperly Narrow Geographic Focus Masked Full Impacts

By only focusing within the 5 mile BIA, the DEIS conveniently ignores the environmental and human impacts of displacement of congestion downstream of the BIA, areas that are already experiencing significant congestion

Tolling and High Intensity Transit Not Analyzed without a New Highway Bridge

A true alternatives analysis also should have measured the effects of tolling and high intensity transit investments (HCT plus significant feeder service increases) in the absence of new highway bridge components (i.e. using the existing bridges). In other words, there should have been three additional scenarios, each with no new highway bridge and with 1) tolling only, 2) high intensity transit only and 3) both. This would have allowed measuring of the impact of these non-highway solutions on overall demand. The woefully inadequate analysis in the DEIS shows¹ that HCT and tolling reduce demand by 15% at the same time that capacity is increased on I-5. One could argue that tolling and improved transit would do an even better job in the absence of increased capacity on the freeway. Note: seismic upgrades and certain interchange removal and configuration changes could have been part of the above highway components.

Inadequate Documentation of Analysis of Alternatives not Carried Forward

Documentation of the prior analysis and evaluation of alternatives is poor under **2.5 Alternatives Considered But Not Advanced** section (2-46 – 2-51). There is no listing there of the 12 alternatives that made it through Step B nor is are the reasons for elimination given. DEIS Chapter 2 p. 2-51 refers the reader to a separate ***Development of the Range of Alternative*** document for more details. Also, neither the DEIS nor the ***Development of the Range of Alternative*** document mention Alternative A+, although it was developed late in the process in March 2007 by the 4th Alternative Subcommittee of the CRC. (See ***Alternative A+*** elsewhere in this document).

The ***Development of the Range of Alternatives*** (281 pp.) itself does not have the final alternative narrowing steps, only earlier analysis². It is also not packaged with the DEIS and is concealed among various other documents in the CRC's online library.

The actual filtering rationales are hidden in 11/29/06 Task Force Meeting Materials: **Criterion Performance Report** (93-149) and **River Crossing Recommendations CRC Task Force November 29, 2006 PPT** slideshow (213-234). This kind of non-transparency is unacceptable in a document that is a crucial decision-making tool. After all, it is the alternative analysis process and not just the conclusions that the public is supposed review and comment on.

¹ Summarized in 3/11/08 CRC Powerpoint Presentation – Portland Planning Commission
CRCStaff080311PPTPresentationToPDXPlngComm.pdf slide 59.

² These include: **Portland/Vancouver I-5 Transportation and Trade Partnership Final Plan** (7-135)
DRAFT COMPONENTS STEP A SCREENING REPORT 4/19/06 (150-194)
DRAFT COMPONENTS STEP B SCREENING REPORT 6/9/06 (196-231)

Biased Treatment of Alternatives

Alternatives dismissed because they did not involve adding capacity to I-5 were evaluated in isolation. The big build alternatives were always packaged with HCT, so that they could be declared “balanced”, which automatically gave them brownie points with regard to such criteria as consistency w/ growth management.

Improperly Narrow Definition of Influence Area

Alternatives that provided additional capacity parallel to, but not on I-5 were faulted for not contributing to capacity in the Bridge Influence area.

Examples: 3/22/06 Draft Components Step A Screening Report alternatives RC-14, RC-16, RC-18, RC-19, RC-21, and RC-22.

Insufficient Range of Alternatives

The fact that staff seriously proposed to go into the DEIS with basically one build alternative with two transit flavors (11/ 21/06 Staff Recommendation) not only indicated a predetermined bias toward a high capacity replacement freeway bridge, but also a flagrant disregard for the purpose of a DEIS.

Insufficient Explanation of Traffic Impacts of Supplemental Arterial Bridge

Traffic impacts on downtown Vancouver of supplemental arterial bridge not fully explained. Assumptions and rationale needed. There appears to have been no investigation of various options for tying the north end of that arterial into SR-14, I-5 or the street network in Vancouver.

Biased Treatment of Alternatives

CRC analysis of alternatives to a more capacious replacement freeway bridge consisted of trying to shoot holes in those alternatives at the earliest opportunity and not put any effort into optimizing those alternatives before measuring them up against each other.

Example: Staff faulted Jim Howell's 11/8-23/06 conceptual proposals for failing to meet detailed engineering requirements (e.g. Introducing too sharp curves)³

Biased Treatment of Alternatives

Statement that central Vancouver would not be economically benefited by increase of traffic due to a supplementary arterial bridge flies in the face of empirical evidence to the contrary. It is traffic streaming by on freeways that frequently does not benefit adjacent local street oriented businesses, like those in downtown Vancouver.⁴

³ 1/23/07 CRC Memo to Jim Howell (see [070123-C-CRCAssessOfAORTA11-8-06Proposal.pdf](#)) in AORTAs 7/1/08 emailed/mailed set of documents for inclusion in the CRC DEIS record.

Note: In the current Portland Mall Project, officials have been willing to compromise transit operations due to an EIS finding that allowing traffic to drive by (but not stop) along the entire length of the Mall will benefit adjacent businesses. The Mall configuration established in 1977 had only provided auto access for 3 blocks at a time.

Tolling and Transit Calculation Error

The ***Traffic Demands Reflect Multi-Modal Project*** slide (#59) in the 3/11/08 **CRC Powerpoint Presentation – Portland Planning Commission** (see footnote 1), which we assume summarizes DEIS analysis elsewhere, seems to make the dubious assertion that tolling will have no impact on transit ridership and hence the diversion of I-5 trips.

From the bar chart on slide 59: Without tolls, adding transit to the build alternative reduces traffic by 15,000 per day. With tolls, adding transit reduces traffic by 15,000 per day. Conclusion – tolls will have no effect on the attractiveness of transit. This is absurd.

Biased Treatment of Alternatives – Disappearance of Alternative A+

Alternative A+ was developed as part of the 4th Alternative Subcommittee work (3/12/07 – 3/27/07). This alternative was suddenly dropped between the 3/19/07 and 3/26/07 meetings. There is no documentation as to why, except for the threat by the DOTs that they would withdraw their participation from (and presumably funding of) the project if it were pursued. The March 19th meeting packet contains a March 15, 2007 memo from Kris Strickler to the Fourth Alternative Subcommittee, defining option A+ and giving the CRC staff perspective.

If one examines this memo, one will find both that A+ met the “purpose and need” of the project, and A+ was unacceptable to CRC staff. This memo makes this remarkable statement:

If Option A+ is selected as the locally preferred alternative (LPA) it is unlikely that either ODOT or WSDOT would continue funding work on the project.

Identified Interstate improvements would be prioritized, funded and built along with other highly needed improvements in each state.

There is no written explanation as to why the state DOTs, which are both charged to be multi-modal agencies, would no longer be interested in the project, especially if interchange improvements, TDM actions and highway related actions were part of the project.

Public Misinformation

AORTA has elsewhere discussed instances of misinformation by project staff and consultants⁵. Here is another example, relating to the potential for seismically upgrading the existing I-5 bridges. Source: **9/27/06 Task Force Meeting Materials**⁶: *The panel determined that it is technically feasible to retrofit the existing bridges to a level of service that would meet “no*

⁴ 112906_TF_MeetingMaterials.pdf p. 48

⁵ See **Testimony by Fred Nussbaum on Behalf of AORTA at the Columbia River Taskforce 6/24/08 (080624-A-FNTestimonyToCRCTaskForce6-24-08.pdf)** in AORTA's 7/1/08 emailed/mailed set of documents for inclusion in the CRC DEIS record.

⁶ CRC Online Library: 092706_TF_MeetingMaterials.pdf

collapse” criteria, though the expense could be equal to a substantial portion of the cost of a new structure.

This is a gross exaggeration. In fact, the cost of priority level seismic retrofitting was determined to be \$100 – 200 Million, about the same as is now budgeted for demolition of the existing bridges.

Insufficient Range of Alternatives

There is no least cost alternative that probably would have included tolling, seismic upgrade and high intensity transit, but no new freeway bridge.

Submitted by

Fred Nussbaum
AORTA Strategic Planner
Association of Oregon Rail and Transit Advocates
7/1/08

OregonRail@aol.com
OregonRail@aol.com

Memorandum

To: **Heather Gundersen**
 From: **Fred Nussbaum, Strategic Planner**
 Date: **July 1, 2008**
 Re: **AORTA Documents for Inclusion in Columbia River Crossing DEIS Comments**

Attached electronically and on a compact disk to be mailed under separate cover is a folder containing the most significant correspondence between **AORTA** and the Columbia River Crossing Task force and its staff since 2005. This covers the period during which the Task Force was developing alternatives in preparation for the CRC Project DEIS and these communications should be part of the record, if not already included. They provide input on the development of CRC alternatives. The attachment and CD also contain a folder of documents prepared or contributed to by **AORTA** for SmarterBridge.org, a loose coalition of organizations and individuals concerned about the Columbia Crossing. Finally, the attachment and CD contain a third folder with documents supporting the arguments of both **AORTA** and SmarterBridge.org. A summary of most of these documents follows.

We request that all of the above documents be entered into the DEIS record.
 The document name are keyed as thusly: yymmdd, followed by a letter within hyphens indicating the source; A = AORTA, C = CRC and S = SmarterBridge.

A. AORTA Correspondence (AORTA Correspondence folder)

Please note that some of the attached correspondence is not specifically identified as from AORTA, but came from AORTA director Jim Howell or Fred Nussbaum. Both Jim Howell and I have been designated by the AORTA Board to be our primary point persons on this project. All of the attached correspondence should be considered official correspondence from our organization, whether identified as from AORTA or not.

1. A 5/4/05 memo from Jim Howell to the CRC Task Force re: **Keeping I-5 on the Existing Columbia River Bridges** (4 pp.) including a transportation plan drawn on a B&W photo and a concept plan for redevelopment of the Vancouver waterfront. The proposal included a multimodal supplemental bridge for light rail, bikes/peds and local traffic adjacent to I-5 and a possible second local traffic crossing near the railroad bridge.
Filename: 050504-A-KeepingI-5onExistingBridges.pdf
2. A 4/11/06 memo from Jim Howell to the CRC Task Force re: **AORTA's critique of the Columbia River Crossing Draft Components Step "A" Screening Report (March 22, 2006)** (4 pp.). Rebutals in detail the erroneous rejection of the Non-Freeway Multi-Modal Columbia River Crossing and Commuter Rail in that report.
Filename: 060411-A-RebuttaltoScreeningReport(R).pdf
3. A 9/26/06 white paper from Jim Howell pointing out there are numerous seismically vulnerable structures on I-5 besides the Columbia bridges and that I-205 provides an alternate route. Also points out the railroad bridge is equally vulnerable and has no alternate route, while carrying much more freight tonnage. Finally, the local supplemental bridge, constructed to seismic standards, could provide a connection for priority traffic.
Filename: 060926-A-SystemicApproachToTheCrossing.pdf
4. An 11/8/06 white paper entitled, **What a Comprehensive Columbia Crossing package built around a new Multi-modal Bridge would do.** (Not on **AORTA** letterhead, but showing Jim Howell as author, 5 pp., including colored transportation plan on B&W photo).
Filename: 061108-A-AORTAs11-8-06ProposedAlt.pdf
5. A 11/23/06 white paper entitled, **What a Comprehensive Columbia Crossing package built around a new Multi-modal Bridge would do**, which is an update to the 11/8/06 proposal described in item A.3 above, (Not on **AORTA** letterhead, but showing Jim Howell as author, 4 pp.). Includes the same

plan as the one accompanying the 11/8/06 proposal in item A.4 above.

Filename: 061123-A-WhatAORTAAltIs.pdf

6. CRC responded on 11/27/06 with a memo to the Task force re: **Jim Howell Proposal** (1 pp.). Had as attachment Jim Howell's 11/23/06 revised proposal with the original (11/8/06) graphic described in item A.5 above.

Filename: 061127-C-CRCRespToAORTA11-8-06Alt.pdf

7. An 11/29/06 memo from Jim Howell to the CRC Task Force re: **CRC Environmental Impact Study** (1 pp.), indicating that an alternative that retains the existing bridges needs to be studied in the Environmental Impact phase. It also summarizes AORTA's proposal (11/8/06, 11/23/06), described in items 4 above and 5 above.

Filename: 061129-A-MemoReCRCEIS.pdf

8. A 1/2/07 memo from Jim Howell to the CRC re: **Response to Nov. 27 Memorandum from staff** (3 pp.), with attachments listed as follows (not included in electronic file):

a) 11-27-06 Memo to: Columbia River Crossing Task Force From: Doug Ficco and John Osborn (item A.6 above)

b) 11-29-06 Memo To: Columbia river Crossing Task Force From: Jim Howell. (Item A.7 above)

c) Multi-modal Bridge Option Site Plan. Jim Howell, 11-08-06, plan included with item A.4 above.

Filename: 070102-A-RespToCRC11-27-07Assess.pdf

9. A 1/20/07 position paper entitled **AORTA's Position on The Columbia River Crossing Project** (2 pp.), unsigned and not on AORTA letterhead, that takes the CRC to task for only having a single big bridge alternative and reviews AORTA's analysis of the problem and proposed bundle of solutions.

Filename: 070120-A-AORTAsPositiononSingleBridgeAlt.pdf

10. A 1/23/07 Memo from CRC Staff re: **Assessment of Jim Howell's Proposed Concept (Association of Oregon Rail and Transit Advocates)** (pp. 20 including attachments). Stars with 6 pages of staff comments on the AORTA's (11/8/06, 11/23/06) plan plus annotations by staff on a proposal plan redrawn on a larger, clearer base by Jim Howell at the request of the CRC. Includes as attachments:

a).1/16/07memo from Osborn and Ficco to the Task Force re: **Letter from AORTA** (1 pp.)

b) 1/2/07 memo from Jim Howell re: **Response to Nov. 27, 2006 Memorandum from staff**. discussed in item A.8 above.

c) 11/29/06 memo from Jim Howell re: **CRC Environmental Impact Study** described in item A.7 above. (1 pp.)

d) 11/27/06 memo from Ficco and Osborn re: **Jim Howell Proposal** described in item A.6 above. (1 pp.)

e) 11/23/06 update to the AORTA proposal described in item A.5 above. (5 pp.)

f) CRC Project Purpose and Need statement.

Filename: 070123-C-CRCAssessOfAORTA11-8-06Proposal.pdf

11. A 2/5/07 memo from Jim Howell re: **Public transit in the CRC Corridor** (4 pp.) questioning whether the transit networks modeled provided adequate levels of service. Two attachments containing figures from the **Draft Components Step A Screening Report** are included in this electronic document.

Filename: 070205-A-070205-A-PublicTransitInTheCrcCorrid.pdf

12. A 3/22/07 memo from Jim Howell to the 4th Alternative Subcommittee re: **Recommendation for a Fourth Alternative** promoting the AORTA alternative. Three attachments are referred to and are included in this electronic document:

a) **Critique of the CRC Staff Assessment of AORTA's Proposed Nov. 8, 2006 Concept for A Columbia River Crossing Emphasizing Public Transportation (keyed to Map)**, includes point by point responses to staff's 1/23/07 comments described in item A.10 above. The responses are numbered and keyed to staff's annotations on the AORTA plan. (1 pp.) Described in item A.13 below.

b) The staff annotated plan, with annotations now numbered by Jim Howell.(1.pp.)

c) AORTA proposed bridge cross-sections. (1 pp.)

Filename: 070322-A-FinalMemoTo4thAltSubcommitt.pdf

13. A 3/22/07 document entitled **Critique of the CRC Staff Assessment of AORTA's Proposed Nov.**

8, 2006 Concept for A Columbia River Crossing Emphasizing Public Transportation (keyed to Map) (2 pp.) that is not on AORTA letterhead, but lists Jim Howell at the bottom. It was an attachment to the 3/22/97 memo described in item A. [REDACTED]. It does not specifically identify the document being critiqued, but the map is the one annotated by staff in its **Assessment** memo of 1/23/07 described in item 10 above. Jim Howell now added numbers to the map annotations to tie them in with the points in his one page critique outline.

Filename: 070322-A-AORTArespToCRCStaffAssessment(Map&Key).pdf

14. A 5/13/08 outline by Fred Nussbaum on behalf of AORTA for its portion of the SmarterBridge.org presentation. This outline summarizes AORTA's position on the CRC components.

Filename: 080513-A-FredsTopicsSmarterBridgePPTSlideOutline.pdf

15. A 5/29/08 white paper by Fred Nussbaum entitled **Five Questions Concerning the I-5 Mega-Bridge Proposal and Its Proponents**. It is a series of questions about the CRC process and our analysis.

Filename: 080529-A-Nussbaum-FiveQuestionsReCRC_forOPB_.pdf

16. Testimony given by Fred Nussbaum on 6/24/08 on behalf of AORTA before the CRC Task Force regarding issues with the CRC DEIS process and requesting halting the selection of the LPA until a Supplemental DEIS is undertaken to answer significant questions raised, not only by citizen groups, but also major decision-making bodies and advisory groups like Metro, Planning Commission, Sustainable Development Commission, and the City of Portland.

Filename: 080624-A-FNTestimonyToCRCTaskForce6-24-08.pdf

17. A log of key email communications between Fred Nussbaum and CRC staff, regarding requested technical information and the lack of timely response. The last entry is 6/26/08, mainly because I went out of town on the 27th and have only had intermittent access to the internet at our vacation home. Staff did send me on 6/30/08 origin-destination they had on hand, but by then it was too late for us to analyze completely.

Filename: 080628-A-FNemailCorrespondenceW-CRCLog.pdf

B. SmarterBridge.org Documents (*DocumentsPreparedForSmarterBridgeTeam folder*)

Six documents

C. Supporting Documents (*Supporting Documents folder*)

Eight documents

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