

November 27, 2006

**TO:** Columbia River Crossing Task Force

**FROM:** Doug Ficco  
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**SUBJECT:** Jim Howell Proposal

**COPY:**

Following up on the discussion at the October 25 Task Force meeting, we have taken another look at the river crossing component that was identified as RC-22 in our component screening process (see *Draft Components Step A Screening Report, March 22, 2006*). To be certain that we fully understood the author's intent, we invited Jim Howell to review his proposal with the project team as well as interested Task Force members.

A copy of the proposed concept is attached, including minor changes recently incorporated. In brief, the concept includes a new bridge just west of the existing bridges with two LRT tracks, a two-lane roadway linking Vancouver and Hayden Island (and extending south to Marine Drive), a new southbound on-ramp to I-5 from SR-14 that would bring the traffic onto the freeway on Hayden Island, and a bicycle/pedestrian pathway. The new bridge would be low-level and would include a lift span. Other elements of the concept would include an LRT loop through downtown Vancouver, and replacing the opening on the downstream railroad bridge with a new opening closer to the center of the river.

The concept is intended to provide a relatively low-cost crossing, and in that spirit includes some creative, although non-standard, elements (some of which would not meet federal and state design requirements). Although the concept has been updated since the earlier screening, the conclusions reached during the component screening phase are still relevant. The concept fails to meet the project Purpose and Need in several key respects. The concept does not:

- o significantly reduce travel demand or congestion;
- o improve freight movement on I-5; or
- o address many of the known safety issues associated with the river crossing and the adjacent interchanges.

Furthermore, with I-5 traffic remaining on the existing bridges, the seismic vulnerability of the river crossing would not be addressed.

Our review of the concept also included a more detailed analysis of traffic operations and a comparison of the concept to the No-Build Alternative and to Alternative 3—the arterial/LRT crossing carried forward as part of the initial 12 alternatives. The concept would not significantly improve the daily hours of congestion when compared to the No-Build or Arterial alternatives, and would not improve travel speeds crossing the river. Moreover, the proposed configuration of the freeway ramps on Hayden Island would exacerbate the congestion and safety problems for both the northbound and southbound weaving areas between Hayden Island and Marine Drive when compared to the existing ramp configurations. It would also add traffic volumes to the currently congested Marine Drive interchange while reducing its functional capacity by creating a new intersection just west of the interchange.

CRC staff recommends that the prior conclusions and actions by the Task Force (and others) should stand, and that no further action on this concept is warranted.