

Twenty-one Bad Reasons to build a \$4 Billion Columbia Crossing:

Proponents Say the New Bridge will:	Response
1. Create jobs for construction	A given amount of Federal Pork will generate about the same amount of jobs whether it goes for highway, light rail, or intercity high speed rail, or whatever, and probably cost the same amount of “political capital.”
2. Provide congestion relief	The tolling and transit components of the CRC provide the real relief and a 12-lane bridge is not needed to achieve this. Over time, tolling plus lack of more highway capacity plus better transit creates secondary effects – changes in land use, home ownership patterns, etc. that decrease amount and length of trips, eliminating the projected growth in travel. These secondary effects may well be much larger than the immediate effects of tolls, and have more widespread benefits. (See also 20 below).
3. Get us a light rail line – light rail can use the new bridge	There are alternatives to getting LRT across the river and the CRC project does not improve the transit system overall. Getting LRT to Vancouver does not require a big freeway bridge. A separate LRT bridge can be built more cheaply as a separate project than it can as part of a new highway bridge and can be timed in keeping with regional LRT project priorities. There are other LRT projects that potentially are more cost-effective.
4. Get us improved pedestrian and bicycle facilities on a new bridge.	Just because the big bridge proposal includes pedestrian and bicycle facilities doesn't mean their inclusion provides adequate trade-off for the significant environmental damage such a highway bridge will produce. The existing bridge can be retrofitted, but better pedestrian and bicycle facilities can be provided on a new transit-only bridge.
5. Bring Federal Money to Oregon's economy.	This may not be guaranteed and may prevent other projects from being funded. This may actually be a trap, because the Feds will pay for only a portion, while this region will be on the hook for the 2/3rd's that the Feds won't pay for. This could damage the economy, the way the WPPSS fiasco did.

<p>6. Speed freight movement:</p>	<p>Freight traffic is less than 10% of vehicles over the I-5 bridges, and half of the heavy duty trucks on I-5 are not local...they could be using I-205, but choose to use I-5 because even today it is faster. The greatest obstacle to moving freight are commuters in SOVs during the peak hours...though most logistics outfits know enough to avoid the peaks if possible. Remember the bridges are fine for 90% of the time. Tolls and transit can improve things during that 10% peak time.</p>
<p>7. Coast Guard will make us tear down the old bridges:</p>	<p>Coast Guard has not made such a recommendation. They do not have this authority so long as the bridges are not a hazard to navigation. They set clearance standards for any new bridge, but otherwise do not decide what is done. This belief may stem from the fact that if we built a new bridge, and did not maintain the old ones or tear them down, then the Coast Guard would step in.</p>
<p>8. Old bridges are too old.</p>	<p>Age is not the deciding factor for a well-built steel bridge. The Minneapolis bridge fell due to an identified design defect. The older of the two I-5 bridges was built to carry heavy interurban streetcars (not just horses and Model T's as suggested by CRC propaganda), and is structurally sound, according to Oregon DOT bridge inspectors.</p>
<p>9. Lifts on old bridges disrupt traffic and cause congestion</p>	<p>There was a plan advanced in 2002 by the Columbia River Towboat Association, with full support from local governments, to modify the BN Railroad Bridge so that the river channel would move south to the "hump" in the existing I-5 bridges. This would reduce lifts to perhaps a dozen (limited to middle of the night) per year for specialized equipment. 2002 cost was about \$40 million.</p>
<p>10. Storm water runoff from old bridges pollutes river</p>	<p>This may be true, but how big an issue is this? Can this be mitigated with a storm-drain retrofit? See the "supplemental bridge" option being advanced by the CRC, and use the same techniques.</p>
<p>11. Bridges are a hazard to navigation</p>	<p>See item 9. The Coast Guard determined that moving the channel was appropriate, but did not recommend "Truman Hobbs" funding because the major benefit went to the I-5 users.</p>
<p>12. Bridges will fall down in an earthquake</p>	<p>The CRC has developed a range of seismic strengthening from \$125 to \$250 million (to bring bridges up to current standards). Since the I-205 bridge was built to more modern (but not current) seismic design standards, the Willamette River bridges in Portland are actually much more critical for upgrading, and should be a higher regional priority for strengthening due to their potentially much greater economic impact if they were to fail in an earthquake.</p>

<p>13. Bridges are unsafe for traffic for travelers (“functionally obsolete”)</p>	<p>A targeted range of highway improvements can improve traffic safety for much less cost. Slowing traffic to 45 mph while going past the tolling equipment will result in a large safety improvement, as can peak period closure or restriction of the northbound Hayden Island ramp onto I-5. Reducing peak volumes, via tolls and transit, will also improve safety greatly.</p>
<p>14. Saving the old bridges doesn’t save any money (only a few percent at most)</p>	<p>This is true only if the I-5 crossing is massively expanded and an additional highway bridge is built. Total cost can be kept below \$1 billion when the project purpose and need are met through alternatives that do not involve extensive highway construction. As stated above, an LRT bridge can be built next to the existing bridges, accommodating pedestrians and bicycles as well, for much less than one that is part of a new high highway bridge project.</p>
<p>15. Project will have an insignificant negative effect on the environment.</p>	<p>This assertion is false, and is based on incomplete and inadequate analysis. \$4 billion is too big a sum to spend without achieving a significant POSITIVE effect. Everything in creation is composed of small pieces. Achieving carbon reduction will fail if we do not apply our goals to each and every piece that we can. Nothing should be exempt without overwhelming reasons, and the effect, if properly measured is not insignificant.</p>
<p>16. This is a project requiring regional cooperation. This is a compromise between Oregon and Washington, necessary to obtain Federal funding.</p>	<p>The Bi-State Commission, which preceded the CRC, had an agreement for 10-Lanes total, 6-lanes through, approved by the two States and the local jurisdictions. This deal was hijacked by the DOT’s because they wanted more highway. So much for compromise. Washington has just as much to benefit from reducing greenhouse gas emissions as Oregon, and there is where the cooperation should be.</p>
<p>17. The preferred build option actually has less traffic than the no-build.</p>	<p>The CRC has made this projection for the case where the new bridge and I-205 are both tolled, and new transit is built, while their “no-build” has no tolls and has bad transit (including a <i>decline</i> in C-Tran service). If we were to instead apply tolls and add transit to a facility that does not significantly expand highway capacity beyond minor safety improvements, we will, of course, achieve significantly less traffic than the “preferred” option.</p>
<p>18. This project needs tolls to reduce traffic, and you can’t toll an Interstate if you don’t have a major construction project.</p>	<p>The CRC project has already assumed tolling I-205, which will not be reconstructed. Whether the decision is administrative or legislative, it fits with a growing consensus that tolls are going to be necessary on some existing facilities as an alternative to new construction. CRC staff believe that the Federal Highway Administration already has the authority to allow this when conditions warrant.</p>

<p>19. This project is a done deal, with too much momentum, so we might as well make the best of it.</p>	<p>The Mt. Hood Freeway was a “done deal” and the money for that was already appropriated. Yet citizens stopped that ill-conceived freeway project and replaced it with Light Rail. Naturally the lobbyists hired by the CRC have attempted to create this impression of a “done deal”, but an impression is all that it is.</p>
<p>20. Reducing congestion will save fuel and reduce pollution.</p>	<p>If we replace 6 congested lanes with 12 congested lanes, we will use more fuel and create more pollution on I-5, and the secondary impacts from more sprawl will compound the effect. It is doubtful that in the future there will be even short-term savings from reducing congestion, because hybrid vehicles actually get better fuel mileage in stop-and-go traffic than at boulevard or freeway speeds.</p>
<p>21. No other alternatives can meet the need.</p>	<p>In the spring of 2007, a “Fourth Alternative” subcommittee of the CRC considered and rejected option “A+” which would have met the stated purpose and need of the project to solve congestion, by building new transit, and instituting aggressive “demand management.” This, or a comparable option, should have been studied for the Draft Environmental Impact Statement, as it would have been a significant improvement over the “No Build” in terms of carbon emissions.</p>