Summary of Problems with the CRC Task Force Proposal and Rationales

I. Over-predict 2030 Travel Demand

By not taking into account concurrent actions that will have to be undertaken to implement greenhouse gas reduction policies, which of necessity will require reduction in VMT.[1]

By not using iterative modeling that recognizes that congestion will cause travel behavior changes, which will in turn reduce the growth of sprawl.

Therefor come up with oversized build solutions that will harm both the human and natural environment.

II. Ignore the Empirical Fact that Increasing Capacity Induces Increased Travel – both in the Number and Length of Trips

Assume the same 2030 Clark County land use and population for both the build and No Build alternatives. Thus they erroneously assume the increased capacity and speed will have no impact on land use patterns.

The build alternatives do not factor in induced travel caused by the massive increase in capacity that expanding a six narrow lane facility to a colossal 12-lane bridge reflects.[2]

Argue that by speeding up vehicles and reducing congestion, the new bridge will reduce idling and thereby reduce global warming and air pollution. This claim is not credible.[3]

III. Tilt Their Analysis toward Building a Massive Bridge by Ignoring Viable Low-impact Alternatives

Analyzing tolls on the build alternatives, while not doing so in a no build scenario allows them to achieve lower VMT growth, less congestion and faster travel times in the build alternatives. They neatly avoid the question that perhaps tolling the existing bridges would obviate the necessity of adding capacity with a new bridge.

IV. Imply that the Massive New Bridge is the Best and Only Way to Provide High Capacity Transit, Bicycle and Pedestrian Links

The real story is that they've made sure those alternative modes are included in order to make the freeway expansion more palatable.

V. Use Exaggerated and Knowingly False Arguments to Try to Make Us Believe there is No Other Solution

CRC staff and proponents intimate that the current bridges are inherently unsafe and structurally unsound, when there is no evidence to that effect.

1. True, the bridges are not up to current seismic codes, but neither are most of the other Interstate highway structures throughout the metropolitan region.[4]
2. The bridges could be seismically upgraded to 2500-year earthquake standards for at most $200 M, much less than the $4 B price tag for the massive new bridge. . From

a sustainability standpoint, it makes sense for the City and Region to supplement the existing structures rather than to demolish them, thereby saving the opportunity cost for important, sustainable projects that do not increase fossil fuel vehicle capacity.

3. The traffic safety issues are mostly due to poorly configured, too closely spaced interchanges that cause dangerous merge moves and traffic turbulence, not the bridges themselves. These interchanges could be rationalized and redesigned, again for much less than the cost of the new bridge.
4. Traffic safety issues caused by bridge lifts could be obviated by replacing the swing span on the railroad bridge with a faster lift span closer to the middle of the river. This solution would also only cost about $100 M could be paid for from a special Coast Guard bridge fund, because it would improve navigation safety for river traffic. It also would greatly improve rail operations by providing a faster bridge opening mechanism.[5]

VI. Claim Long Distance International and Interstate Travel and Commerce Suffer Greatly From I-5 Bridge Congestion

Only 25-32% of the total traffic on the bridges is through traffic and much of that are trips that start and end within 50 miles of the crossing.

If fact, most of the traffic is between points within the metropolitan region, including many short trips starting and/or ending adjacent to the Bridge Influence Area.

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[1] These ignored policies and actions include:

1. 2008 adopted State of Oregon climate change goals – a 75% reduction in global warming pollution from 1990 levels by 2050.
2. 2008 adopted State of Washington climate change goals – Chapter 14, Laws of 2008 requires an 18% reduction in per capita VMT by 2020, 35% by 2035, and 50% by 2050.
3. Has not projected what the fossil fuel carbon tax or “cap and trade” policy and regime will be going forward, and how it will affect driving in the region, in 2020 or 2030.
4. Does not reference the Commission’s Peak Oil Task Force Report, nor the City Council’s unanimously-adopted resolution calling for a 50% reduction in fossil fuel use by 2030 in the city.
5. Has projected a price for oil at $100 a barrel in 2030, while oil recently hit $113 a barrel. There are no CRC projections of how demand for a new bridge might be affected by this increased cost of fossil fuel.

[2] The last time we increased capacity across the Columbia River was the Glenn Jackson Bridge, completed in 1982.

1. Projections for travel by Clark County residents and commuter trips on the Bridge were almost 50% less than actually happened in 2000 and 2005.
2. There is plenty of developable land in Clark County, and Washington does not have strong land-use laws and protection of forest and farmland.

3. As a result, there is ample reason to believe that additional capacity will be filled by people choosing to live in what is today a very sprawled-out pattern in Clark County. This will cause more and longer vehicle trips than are projected, and a resultant increase in Vehicle Miles Traveled and, therefore, greenhouse gas emissions.

[3] The experience is that additional freeway capacity means that congestion from greater vehicle use will simply occur at chokepoints upstream and downstream from the current (bridge). It is more reasonable to assume that a new bridge will simply move congestion. We all know that we cannot successfully build our way out of congestion with additions to freeway capacity.

[4] From a sustainability standpoint, it makes sense for the City and Region to supplement the existing structures rather than to demolish them, thereby saving the opportunity cost for important, sustainable projects that do not increase fossil fuel vehicle capacity.

[5] Such a multi-modal solution would be more in keeping with stated local and state policies and would provide a more sustainable solution to the issues prompting this project.