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Subject: DEIS Comments
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CRC Draft Environmental Impact Statement Comments....
Please see attachment.
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July 1, 2008

CRC Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS)

Comments

The CRC "build" option is a monumental undertaking, the largest in this region's history. Much of the \$4 billion cost of this project will be gathered as a fuel tax, tolls or some debt instrument and, as I understand it, at the expense of other important regional transportation needs. In fact I am told that the funding of the "build" option will take precedence over other needed transportation spending in the region. Reduced options do not sound a wise planning choice to me.

Furthermore, in my opinion, these costs are based on some very doubtful and extremely speculative projections in light of today's global and economic uncertainties. For example the current oil supply crisis, the mortgage crisis, unemployment, inflation and huge national and personal debts, all of which have recently ballooned, suggest to me that expected revenues for construction and operation will be far lower than anticipated. These factors will have a far greater negative impact than are presented in the CRC DEIS. Therefore I recommend that the economic factors used in the DEIS be reviewed and updated to reflect present realities and trends, and that a concrete proposal be made that will describe exactly how the project will be funded.

As I understand it the "build" proposal will only serve to "induce" more vehicular travel, travel that is presently congested mainly due to residents of Clark County. As stated in the Oregonian (May 18, 2008) "Clark County commuters are the primary cause of the congestion and the primary beneficiaries of the project." These residents have opted out for a suburban life style dependent on the automobile and they probably will continue to do so. Without land use and transportation planning options in place in the Vancouver area it will only be a matter of time before congestion will happen again. This suggest to me that even if rail service is extended to Vancouver it will not be a first choice option for Vancouverites. In other words it would not produce expected revenues or ridership. This real possibility is not mentioned in the DEIS and should be included in the final statement. Therefore I recommend that an analysis be made which describes the loss of revenue from high capacity mode due to commuter choice, especially over the first ten years of operation.

The DEIS suggests that the Portland and Vancouver downtown areas will benefit from a high capacity transit connection between the two. This may be true, but there is no mention about the negative effect of the "enhanced" vehicular traffic flow into the Rose City Quarter. What happens when this high speed vehicular traffic is funneled into the narrow four lane constriction through the Rose City Quarter? It is already a bottleneck and the "enhanced" traffic flow will only worsen the problem. Will the Oregon taxpayer be expected to add more lanes to resolve the problem? Has the City of Portland been denied the option of removing I-5 entirely at some point in the future? This is valuable land and if properly zoned for shops, offices, condominiums, restaurants and hotels it would be a prime revenue producing area for the city. I do not think that this is an option the city would consider feasible. Therefore I recommend that this subsequent lost revenue for the City be included in the environmental study along with the potential cost of improving travel velocities through the Rose Quarter district due to "enhanced" vehicular traffic from the "build" option.

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