

INTERSTATE CORRIDOR*Urban Renewal Area***RECEIVED**

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Columbia River Crossing

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TO: Mayor Tom Potter
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 PDC Commissioner Mohlis
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Columbia River Task Force
 Portland Planning Commission

COPY: Bruce Warner, PDC Executive Director**FROM:** ICURAC Co-Chairs Sheila Holden and Walter Valenta**SUBJECT:** Columbia River Crossing – ICURAC Recommendations for the Locally Preferred Alternative

The Interstate Corridor Urban Renewal Advisory Committee (ICURAC) is an advisory committee to the Portland Development Commission (PDC) Board. On June 16, 2008 ICURAC held a special meeting to discuss the Columbia River Crossing (CRC) project. ICURAC requested this special meeting because a portion of this project is in the Interstate Corridor Urban Renewal Area and because many of the neighborhoods in the URA may be positively or negatively impacted by the project.

ICURAC invited representatives from the CRC to present an overview of the project and the current alternatives outlined in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS). We also invited CRC Task Force members to make brief remarks about the project. At the conclusion of the meeting a majority of ICURAC members present voted to recommend Alternative 3: Replacement crossing with light rail as the Locally Preferred Alternative. A minority of the ICURAC members present supported an alternative that was not studied in the DEIS which would include light rail and demand management techniques such as tolling the existing bridges, but would not make changes to the freeway at the I-5 bridge and the interchanges leading to the bridge. The ICURAC members

supporting this alternative believe that it will help meet climate change goals and avoid shifting I-5 traffic congestion and associated noise and pollutants to new bottleneck locations.

In discussing the CRC project and developing recommendations for a Locally Preferred Alternative, we have identified several project elements that will need further discussion and development. Resolution of these issues is important to the ICURAC and our final support for the project is conditioned on how they are addressed. Issues of concern to the ICURAC and our comments/recommendations follow:

- *Bridge Design:* The ICURAC recommends that the CRC project continue to look for ways to improve the urban design elements of the new bridge. This is a very costly investment at a critical gateway to Oregon and Washington. We believe that this should be a beautiful, landmark quality bridge.
- *Size:* The ICURAC believes that a stacked highway/transit bridge design provides the most cost effective approach. We are also supportive of efforts to identify the appropriate number of auxiliary lanes in the project area and thereby minimizing the footprint and associated impacts of the project on residents, businesses, and environmental and historic resources.
- *Bike and Pedestrian Facilities:* The ICURAC supports the provision of much improved bicycle and pedestrian facilities as a part of this project. ICURAC recommends that to strengthen the connections with the local system and to provide a key missing link, that the CRC project include an extension of the pedestrian and bicycle facilities to include a first phase construction of the Bridgeton Trail between the I-5 bridge and Bridgeton Road.
- *Tolling:* Many concerns about tolling were expressed by the ICURAC. The Committee recommends that if the Interstate Bridge is tolled that further consideration of a fair and equitable rate structure be examined. We also recommend that if I-5 is tolled, that tolls also be placed on I-205 to avoid congesting this parallel corridor.
- *Marine Drive Interchange:* There may be opportunities to create more developable land and better local street connections to the Bridgeton and Kenton neighborhoods with a revised Marine Drive interchange. ICURAC supports further study of design alternatives for this interchange while maintaining the importance of the interchange as the highest volume freight corridor in the state of Oregon and avoiding impacts to the Expo as a regional trade and event center.
- *LRT:* Traffic on Interstate Avenue is congested already and making left hand turns has been problematic. ICURAC recently partnered with the City to upgrade software to improve signal timing and synchronization with light rail trains. It is our understanding that MAX service will increase along with ridership. The next phase of the CRC process should analyze the impact of increased light rail trains in this corridor. Specifically we are looking for the project to identify how more trains will affect traffic operations on Interstate Avenue and the numerous cross streets in the corridor, and to propose mitigation measures to ensure that more congestion does not result.

- *Sustainability:* The ICURAC recommends that the CRC project incorporate as many green building practices as possible and adequately address the issues of climate change that have been raised by the Coalition for a Livable Future and Metro.
- *Environmental Justice:* The ICURAC recommends that the project minimize impacts to North/Northeast Portland and mitigate any disproportionate impacts from the project on low income and minority populations.
- *Air Quality:* The ICURAC and many residents living close to the I-5 freeway continue to be concerned about the public health impacts of this facility. We are encouraged to hear that some long-term improvement in air quality may come to this corridor due, primarily, to requirements for cleaner burning vehicles and fuel. That said, asthma rates are higher in North Portland than in other areas of the region, and we continue to be concerned about air quality and the associated health impacts in this freeway corridor.
- *Enhancement Fund:* In addition to funding the required mitigation measures, the ICURAC recommends the CRC project establish a Community Enhancement Fund/Program. Such a fund was called for in the I-5 Partnership Strategic Plan which identified the need for transportation improvements in the project area. The I-5/Delta Park project established such a fund and we believe that the CRC project should replicate this important community development tool to lessen the impact to the affected neighborhoods of North/Northeast Portland that we serve.
- *Contracting and Workforce Hiring:* One of the most significant benefits of this project is the opportunity for local wealth and job creation resulting from this very large construction project. ICURAC strongly recommends that the agencies responsible for bidding and constructing this project hire and promote the use of local, certified MWESB contractors and include opportunities for apprenticeships for the local workforce. TriMet's light rail construction projects in the Interstate and I-205 corridors and on the Downtown project demonstrate that agencies can meet strong MWESB and workforce training goals.
- *Local Oversight Committee:* Because there are so many important issues to be finalized on this project the ICURAC urges the creation of a Local Oversight Committee to work with the CRC project to finalize the design, financing, and contracting approach for the project. We also recommend that local decision makers, and the community, have an opportunity to weigh in again on the project as the many important details are finalized.

Finally, as a part of our conversation about the CRC project, two additional transportation projects are recommended for further review by the Oregon and Washington Departments of Transportation:

- *Rose Quarter Bottleneck:* The improvements on I-5 at the Interstate Bridge and in the I-5 Delta Park area will not solve the well known Rose Quarter bottleneck problem. In particular, the southbound morning congestion resulting from this bottleneck will result in more idling vehicles adjacent to a very residential area.

Addressing the problems in the Rose Quarter area deserves more careful consideration.

- *Commuter Rail:* The ICURAC recommends further investigation of the commuter rail as part of a long term solution to providing multi-modal options to cross the river.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment. We look forward to hearing how many of the issues raised in this letter are resolved.