


**From:** [Gretchen Starke](#)   
**To:** [Columbia River Crossing;](#)  
**CC:**  
**Subject:** formal comments on deis from vancouver audubon society  
**Date:** Monday, June 30, 2008 3:37:31 PM  
**Attachments:** [columbia river crossing.doc](#)

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To Whom It May Concern:

As representative of an organization, I prefer to submit our formal comments as a document rather than fill out a form. We have particular concerns that do not fit a rigid format. Please find our comments in the attached documents. Thank you.

Gretchen Starke,

Conservation Chair,  
Vancouver Audubon Society

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## VANCOUVER AUDUBON SOCIETY

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The Vancouver Audubon Society understands that transportation issues have an impact on wildlife and wildlife habitat. In the case of the Columbia River Crossing, the greatest impact on wildlife and birds concern greenhouse gas emissions and changes in land use patterns.

Global warming is not only the most serious environmental problem we face, it is the most serious problem, period. It will be difficult to solve that problem because high-carbon emission production is so imbedded into our economy and culture and because few understand the seriousness of the situation. Even those who prepared this EIS, while acknowledging there is a problem, don't realize that business as usual can't continue. To keep the temperature increase resulting from CO<sub>2</sub> emissions at the lowest predictions of the IPCC, the world as a whole must stabilize greenhouse gases at 445 ppm by 2015. As of last summer, green house gas concentrations were approaching 400 ppm (The Physical Science behind Climate Change; Collins, et al; Scientific American, August 2007; pg 64-73). It is apparent that even in our little corner of the world, we are going to have to do all we can to sharply reduce our CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. Business as usual will not do.

All the alternatives considered are based on business as usual, or almost business as usual. While the EIS extrapolates into the future, analyses consider trends that are based on laws and regulations that have passed recently. Perhaps that is all that could be done. Yet, it would have been useful had there been an analysis of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions under the various alternatives, assuming stronger regulations are in place. Such regulations, along with incentives and changes in policies might include the following.

- Policies that sharply decrease the size and fuel consumption of vehicles.
- Policies that discourage the use of private vehicles in urban areas.
- Policies that strongly encourage the movement of long-distance freight from trucks to trains (or barges).
- Policy changes that will sharply decrease growth, either in population increase or in acreage used per unit of population or both.
- Policies that will sharply decrease or eliminate coal as a fuel for electricity production (As far as I could tell, the EIS did not mention that Washington passed a law last year that requires any coal-fueled plant to produce a net increase in CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. As a result of this law, those who proposed a coal-fueled plant near Kalama changed their minds.)

There should have also been another (or maybe two more) alternative examining the effects of building a bridge with capacity for transit, but fewer lanes for trucks and cars.

The reasons for considering such alternatives are that it would be recognized that business as usual may not be the future and that there would be less risk of a bridge being built that was over-built. Experience indicates that, concerning highway construction (including bridge construction), if we build it, they will come. The seeds for the congestion on the I-205 bridge were planted the minute the route of the new freeway and bridge was decided. Greatly increasing the capacity of the I-5 bridge will only encourage more people to live – and drive – in Clark County.

In sum, we support a replacement bridge because the present bridge is simply not safe. Having a bridge collapse into the Columbia, whether caused by an earthquake or simply because there was one truck too many on the bridge, does nothing for wildlife or human beings. Further, each bridge lift causes that much more greenhouse gas emissions. Besides, the DEIS makes clear that the no-build alternative means that CO<sub>2</sub> emissions would increase faster than under any of the supplemental alternatives. I suspect that, because of the lack of meaningful alternatives for getting across the river, even if policies and regulations are improved as I stated above, CO<sub>2</sub> emissions would increase to unacceptable levels under the no build option. We definitely support a public mass transit component. Assuming the people of this country become determined to do what is necessary to lessen the worst effects of global warming, all coal burning electric plants would be replaced by facilities that produce little or no CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. In such a case, light rail would be the better choice. The total replacement of diesel from petroleum by biodiesel would also help with net CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. We do not think that a 12-lane bridge should be built, however. Considering all the ramifications of global warming and the decline of oil availability in the world, it seems likely that vehicular traffic will decrease toward the middle of this century. The bridge would be over-built. Further, the prospect of increased bridge capacity probably would drive even more development in Clark County, an undesirable prospect. We totally oppose the supplemental bridge alternatives.

Sincerely,

Gretchen Starke,  
Conservation Chair,  
Vancouver Audubon Society