



OREGON AFSCME

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June 24, 2008

To Whom It May Concern:

The Oregon AFSCME Environmental Caucus respectfully submits the attached statement for the consideration of the Columbia River Task Force. With this statement, we would like to introduce into your deliberations areas which we feel should be adequately addressed as the Task Force moves forward with the CRC project.

The Oregon AFSCME Council 75 Executive Committee voted to support this statement at its meeting on June 21, 2008.

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration. If you have any questions please refer them to Steve Hughes, 503-239-9858 ext. 123, or steve@oregonafscme.com

Sincerely yours,

The Oregon AFSCME Environmental Caucus

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Columbia River Crossing

Statement of the Oregon AFSCME Environmental Caucus on the Columbia River Crossing

June 21, 2008

We, the members of the Oregon AFSCME Environmental Caucus, work at various public agencies, ranging from Metro, to DEQ, to Multnomah County, and OHSU. We are public employees serving our communities in the planning, environmental, and healthcare fields. As such, we have a professional stake in the decisions being made about the Columbia River Crossing. We are committed to a healthy environment and a high quality of life in our region. As union members and environmentalists, we see common interest between those who are fighting for clean air, sensible planning and combating climate change, and those who are fighting for living wage jobs in our region. Additionally, as members of the organized labor movement, we believe that the issues of working people and social equity must be upheld as the debate over the CRC unfolds. Last, we are concerned that the debate about the CRC could devolve into a "jobs vs. the environment" argument. We feel this false choice is relic of a bygone era.

Therefore, if the Columbia River Crossing bridge project becomes a reality, we would like to see the following areas adequately addressed:

- 1. Financial risks should be minimized from this publicly-funded project.**
We believe in the efficient use of public money. As public employees, it is in our best interest to ensure that public revenue is spent wisely and that major investments in infrastructure should demonstrate a rate of return that justifies the expenditure. Our region will be responsible for a significant piece of the CRC's projected \$4.2 billion price tag. A recent economic analysis¹ noted that the CRC would be the most expensive public works project in the region's history, financing plans are speculative, federal support likely to be small, would require an unprecedented level of debt, and that we face a multi-billion dollar transportation investment deficit already. Moving forward on a plan without a solid funding plan is irresponsible and will negatively impact our ability to fund other public priorities in the future.
- 2. Transportation and economic needs should be balanced with planning and other community needs.**
We realize that transportation impacts our economy and how our communities develop. We are also sympathetic to the importance of creating family wage jobs in the construction of the CRC. However, we're concerned that a larger, multi-lane bridge will make our jobs as public planners more difficult. We fear that this project will come to be seen as a monument to the pitfalls of disconnecting land use planning from transportation planning. Our transportation problems will only be solved if we consistently apply sustainable planning principles to all projects, big and small.
- 3. Public health impacts need to be minimized.**
As stewards of public health, we are concerned about the impacts of the proposed bridge project on health. A recent Health Impact Assessment completed by the Multnomah County Health Department² found that "all of the proposed options for the I-5 bridge expansion (both "build" and "no build" options) have significant potential to affect the health residents of both Multnomah and Clark Counties." Top concerns include toxic air pollution, noise, and obesity (related to increased drive time).
- 4. Climate change and greenhouse gas emissions need to be dramatically reduced.**
We support Oregon's goal of reducing our greenhouse gas emissions to pre-1990 levels in order to avert the worst of predicted climate change. As public employees, we will be responsible for both implementing the directives of the Governor's Climate Change Commission, and managing the consequences of the climate crisis. The changes needed to achieve the state's greenhouse gas emission goals will be difficult as it is. We fear that a larger Columbia River bridge is a step in the wrong direction for meeting these targets.

Therefore, we the members of the Oregon AFSCME Environmental Caucus are calling on our regional leaders to agree on a plan for the CRC that supports the existing statewide goals for greenhouse gas emissions reductions, is protective of public health, and is fiscally responsible. The CRC should balance transportation improvements and the desire to create family wage construction jobs with other planning needs. This project should serve as a symbolic link to a future for our region that is built on smart, sustainable planning; one that our union can be proud of.

¹ "Financial Risks of the Columbia River Crossing", Joe Cortright. June 2, 2008.
http://smarterbridge.org/sites/default/files/cortright_CRC_financial_risk.pdf

² Letter from Multnomah County Health Department director and Health Officer to Columbia River Crossing dated June 9th, 2008.
http://www.co.multnomah.or.us/health/documents/CRC_%20DEIS_response.pdf