

# Alta Vista Design Architecture & Planning LLC

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June 24, 2008



Columbia River Crossing  
700 Washington St., Suite 300  
Vancouver, WA  
98660

RE: Preferred Alternative – The Missing One

To Whom it May Concern:

The attached document is a copy of an e-mail that I sent to the Oregonian today regarding what I believe is a preferred option for the proposed Columbia River Crossing.

ODOT, WDOT, Vancouver and Portland have an opportunity to make a resounding and forward looking statement with the crossing alternative you recommend for a new Columbia River connection between our two states.

All of the leaders of the four key organizations who are sponsoring the new connection project are self-proclaimed advocates of sustainable transportation and communities. As such, you should all be willing to look at alternatives that will work to actually enhance your communities and your sustainability goals. You have a once in a hundred year chance to get this right.

To achieve the right solution, it is critical to look at the problem from more perspectives than might be suggested by the standard textbook solutions that the old transportation models typically bring to the table. Those models were based on easy solutions that depend on cheap fuel costs and limited serious consideration of environmental and community impacts.

One need only look at the Mercer Island I-90 project to see how old ways of thinking resulted in extensive delays and terrible costs increases to a project that could have been completed a decade sooner and probably at half the cost of the final product. If only the engineers and planners had been willing to think outside the box at the beginning of that project rather than many years later when forced to change course by judicial mandate.

It is not too late to take a step back and look at how our world and economy are on track for major changes. Keep in mind that you have only invested in paper and ego. With a little courage and an open mind, you can set aside your current paper concepts and explore alternatives that are based upon a new and expanded intermodal transportation model for this connection.

Borrowing from a Hollywood movie line, I would like to suggest that you consider this thought – Life without a Tunnel is chaos!

Respectfully,

Richard Bryant, AIA

Attachment: E-mail correspondence to Dylan Rivera, The Oregonian

RECEIVED

JUN 26 2008

Columbia River Crossing

## Richard Bryant

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**From:** Richard Bryant [altavistadesign@comcast.net]  
**Sent:** Tuesday, June 24, 2008 9:44 AM  
**To:** Richard Bryant  
**Subject:** Proposed I-5 Columbia River Bridge

Dylan:

I have been following the replacement bridge proposal proposed by ODOT for the I-5 / Columbia River Crossing.

Unfortunately ODOT is mentally stuck in "Old Think" when it comes to future transportation planning for this vital river crossing and interstate link. All they can think about is a replacement BRIDGE.

Why not think outside the box and seriously consider a TUNNEL under the river? We obviously have the technology!

The crossing distance is far less than the distance between England and France. The Chunnel successfully carries many different vehicle modes. I suspect the technical issues of a tunnel under the Columbia would also be far less difficult than those encountered by the Chunnel, BART, the tunnel-crossing in Norfolk, VA., etc., etc., etc.

The bridge-only discussion also seems to have glossed-over the impact on existing communities that now exist along the current path of I-5. The route through downtown Portland and Vancouver is not currently 12-lanes wide. Since the present freeway width is not 12-lanes, there only seems to be two options.

1. Leave the freeway width the same as now exists and suffer continued traffic bottlenecks - or
2. Widen the freeway to 12 lanes all the way from North Vancouver to Wilsonville and suffer the negative environmental impacts.

Leaving the width as it now exists will eventually create a bottleneck of merging lanes and simply move the problem into some other community.

Likewise – increasing the width of the freeway will add significantly to attacks on the livability of adjacent neighborhoods and heat-sinks of pavement that will impact the micro-climate of the two cities that are most immediately impacted by the proposed bridge solution.

### **Suggestion:**

Both communities and DOTs need to take a step back and look at the proposed bridge solutions under the light of our changing environment and oil-based economy.

A tunnel solution needs to be seriously evaluated and include the following out-of-the-box possibilities:

1. Light-rail
2. Space for future high-speed rail
3. Dedicated freight-rail
4. Dedicated truck lanes
5. Dedicated car lanes

### **Tunnel Advantages:**

- Tunnel construction is well understood and technically feasible for this project.
- Allows the existing bridges and freeway lanes to remain fully active and uncompromised during tunnel construction and beyond
- Existing bridges can be replaced in the future if tunnel capacity is reached
- Avoids conflict with river-shipping needs
- Presents less visual blight on the community
- Avoids conflicts with air-traffic flight paths

- Reduces negative environmental impacts from light pollution, noise, heat-sink effect, air-quality, and neighborhood disruption

Dylan, the next time you attend one of the I-5 river crossing hearings, pose the tunnel option to the representatives of ODOT, WDOT, Vancouver and Portland to see how they react. It is time to challenge the status quo way of thinking only about a bridge solution.