


**From:** [DOUGLAS GREENE](#)   
**To:** [Columbia River Crossing](#)  
**CC:**  
**Subject:** Input Re I-5 Bridge discussion at Vancouver City Council-6/30/08  
**Date:** Monday, June 30, 2008 9:12:48 PM  
**Attachments:** [I-5 BRIDGE My name is Douglas Greene.doc](#)

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CRC Task Force

Attached please find a 4 page synopsis of my thoughts and recommendations re this highly controversial project re the costs and particularly the light rail as it pertains to residents of Clark County. Please pass the 2nd paragraph at bottom of page 2 to someone in WDOT and ODOT as this REALLY works.

Douglas Greene. 360/699-6194.

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## I-5 THOUGHTS

6/30/08

My name is Douglas Greene. I've have lived in Vancouver for 18 years and have also lived in Portland for 15 years.

The I-5 bridge has never been referred to as a Bridge Of The Gods, but more aptly referred to as the bridge of the "god-dammed"

Going back to 1958, when the 2nd span was built, it was "damned" by the river pilots as it was still a drawbridge and it was "damned" by people driving cars over the bridge as they were delayed by bridge openings.

Years of discussions and options have been discussed to remedy the problem and it was only 3 years ago (47 years after the 2<sup>nd</sup> span was completed) that 39 people came together creating the CRC task force

What has been presented, after 3 years of study and \$50 million, are proposals that will have a hard time satisfying the 8 Federal and State agencies that will have to sign off on a plan. There are the state legislatures in WA and OR, Congress, the Fed Highway Trust Fund, ODT, WDOT and the taxpayers of Clark County who may have to foot 1/3 of the bill.

Frankly, the cost of this project cannot nor will not be supported by the aforementioned government agencies, fed/state/local nor even with tolls which I am personally against.

The latest figures call for an expenditure of some \$4.0-\$4.2 BILLION----Let me say that again: over \$4 BILLION DOLLARS for a bridge project.

But wait! This is not about just building a bridge, it about a massive road construction project with super-interchanges, light rail and a host of pork barrel road improvements that puts the Alaska "bridge to nowhere" to shame.

Let's explore the nature of this project. I-5 is an international, interstate highway connecting Canada, WA, OR, CA and Mexico where goods and employees use the highway to maintain the economy of the Great Northwest. I want to say that again: This is an International, Interstate Highway.

The bridge has been a bottleneck to interstate traffic for over 30 years. The I-205 bridge was supposed to alleviate some of the strain on the I-5 bridge with its 8 lane bridge and, supposedly, designed to carry the light rail system to the East side of Vancouver where open land and expansion was predicted. While that expansion did occur, despite the lack of the light rail being installed, and now that bridge is nearing capacity.

As interstate and NAFTA commerce continues to grow, more pressure will be put on the I-5 crossing. Continued growth North of Vancouver into Woodland, Ridgefield and LaCenter will put more pressure on the I-5 corridor. Let us not forget the Indian Casino that is planned for I-5 at La Center that will draw huge crowds from Portland.

We do need another bridge and perhaps 2 more bridges if we wanted to plan for the future. We probably need a new 3 digit interstate loop connecting WA and OR but that's a discussion for another day.

So let's concentrate on the I-5 corridor and what could or should be done, NOW, not after 3 more years of study.

For the time being, on the North side of the river, there are 3 lanes going South and 3 going North, the same is true on the South side of the river except in Delta Park where the lanes drop to 2 commonly known as the "Delta Squeeze". Do the math: 3 lanes going North and 3 lanes going South (when Delta is unfrozen). The chances of either WA or OR being in a position of increasing those lanes by 1-2 is unreasonable due to the encroaching and proximity of commercial and residential buildings. Double decking the interstate thru Vancouver and Portland is equally impossible.

So where is the need for a 12 lane bridge? We will now have two more bottlenecks getting off the 12 land bridge on either side of this new bridge. Okay, I acknowledge the need for "auxiliary lanes" to more easily serve the ON-OFF ramps and perhaps an emergency lane, BUT 12 lanes! I'm not sure 10 lanes are required as proposed by the Vancouver, BIA consultant. I read this report on-line this morning and have to agree with many of the consultant's ideas, except tolling.

A 12 lane bridge is to cost \$1.2 BILLION so a 10 lane bridge should cost less, perhaps, \$1.0 Billion. That bridge alone would immediately address the highway traffic problem for years to come as there is little chance that I-5 will ever be expanded beyond 3 lanes in each direction.

Now, where is the other \$3.0 BILLION being spent? First of all, \$1.1 BILLION is earmarked for the expansion of light rail to WA. Although this has been voted down by 65%-75% in votes in Clark County, on several occasions, here it is again. If we decided not to build it over the I-205 bridge, why do we think it should cross the I-5 bridge, especially when WA growth is East of Vancouver city? The new I-5 bridge should be reinforced to accommodate light rail in the future but only when government treasuries are more solvent.

The DEIS (draft environment impact statement) proposes spending another \$1.5 BILLION on auxiliary lanes from 39<sup>th</sup> Street to Interstate Ave. in OR, with 5 new interchanges. Remember, the original need was to build a BRIDGE over the Columbia River that would not be a drawbridge, be earthquake resistant and to satisfy the needs of vehicular traffic—3 lanes North and 3 lanes South, and at the same time allow commercial river traffic proceed without those bridge openings.

I lost track of the other \$200Million: Must be in the bureaucratic rounding.

What we should do, RIGHT NOW, is to add flashing signs to the top girders on the bridge, going both ways, simply stating: MAINTAIN YOUR SPEED ON THE BRIDGE. I've seen this work in Eastern cities. This simple embellishment will surprise everyone as to how it will speed up traffic. If you study the traffic patterns going North, after the slow traffic reaches the "bump" on the bridge, traffic speeds up and there are actual gaps in the traffic going into WA. The same is true going into OR but the Delta freeze slows things again.

What next you say!

The US entered WWII on December 7, 1941 and the war ended in the summer of 1945. As a country, we enlisted and moved 2 million troops to Europe. We built hundreds of thousands of planes, tanks, ships, armored vehicles in that time. We built new bridges across many of the rivers in Europe, some new, some as replacements. We fed and housed millions of troops. All in less than 4 years.

We have spent 3 years planning 1 bridge. We have 3 plans we can't fathom where we are going to get the \$4.0 BILLION to start this project so perhaps we will linger for a few more years before we can decide what to build and, where to get the money etc. In the meantime, steel, cement, asphalt and labor will have increased 25%-50% pushing the cost of the project into the stratosphere.

Why not build an 8-10 lane bridge NOW at a cost of \$1.0 BILLION, (the cost of the new Tacoma Narrows bridge was less than \$1.0 BILLION but is longer than the Columbia River crossing)? We see that Minneapolis was able to replace their 12 lane bridge that collapsed two years ago for way less than \$1.0 billion.

I'm sure if there was a George Patton or O.O. Howard in charge we'd get this bridge built in way less than 18 months.

As to the future, we will need a new interstate highway loop around Vancouver, another bridge and an expansion of the I-5 interstate system south of Portland.

Now is the time to get moving on this project. With the commercial and residential industries in a sever decline, we have the skilled labor to build this bridge. With the auto and commercial construction industries in a slump we would have ready access to steel. The same goes for the concrete, rebar and asphalt required for the bridge.

We need the intestinal fortitude to get out of the study mode and consider issuing some 30 year bonds to pay for the bridge and to look to many ways to collect revenues from the Federal, State and Local governments. Perhaps we should start collecting sales taxes on internet sales as a starter.

The road to success has many tempting parking places. Our parking lot is overflowing. Why go into something to test the waters, go in and make a splash.

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