

From: craigandcolleen@comcast.net
To: [Draft EIS Feedback;](#)
CC:
Subject: DEIS Document Viewer Feedback
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Attachments:



From: Colleen McMullen
Zip Code: 98683
Address: 2611 SE 152nd Ave
City: Vancouver
State: WA
E-Mail: craigandcolleen@comcast.net
Section: Chapter 3. EXISTING CONDITIONS AND ENVIRONMENTAL
CONSEQUENCES
Page: 3-1

Comment or Question:

I have grave concerns that the Draft EIS does not take into proper account the cumulative effect that bridge tolls at the rates proposed would have on neighborhoods and businesses in Vancouver as a whole, in addition to the disproportionate impact it could have on low-income populations (as is briefly addressed in Section 3.5 the Draft EIS). In short, I am concerned that a bridge toll program with tolls as high as are being proposed would have the long-term effects of (1) causing a migration of higher income residents and "brain drain" out of Vancouver, (2) causing businesses to flee Vancouver (or not to locate in Vancouver in the first place), and (3) lowering property values in Vancouver. These impacts of the current tolling proposal could result in effectively transforming Vancouver into a slum suburb of Portland.

My husband and I are both lawyers and Vancouver residents. (I am currently inactive). When we each settled in Vancouver, we commuted from Vancouver to Portland each day. Eventually, we both found work in Vancouver and no longer commute daily. Even as relatively high-income residents, we would not have elected to live in Vancouver if we were faced with the prospect of paying tolls as high as \$1200/year (or \$2400/year, if we were both commuting) just to get to work, plus additional tolls every time we visited family or friends in Oregon.

My household would consider the high-cost tolls a barrier to choosing to reside or work

in Vancouver and I expect many other households (including high-income households) would have the same view. In addition, workers in many high-income jobs work variable and unpredictable hours, which makes mass transit a less realistic alternative (because the workers cannot be confident that trains or buses will be running frequently at the times the workers need them). If the proposed high-cost toll program is put into place, I am concerned the following impacts will disproportionately affect Vancouver communities and I urge the task force to consider and address them (and to consider whether a lower-cost toll program is feasible):

1. Vancouver businesses may have increased difficulty recruiting workers and filling positions, both because (a) Oregon workers may be unwilling to apply for those jobs (knowing they would pay tolls to commute to Washington), and (b) fewer Washington workers may be available to fill the positions (if Washington residents move to Oregon to avoid tolls, particularly in two-income homes where at least one worker is already employed in Oregon);
2. Vancouver businesses may experience a "brain drain" or shortage of high-qualified workers for professional positions because those workers tend to work variable hours and will not be able to rely on mass transit or be eligible for financial relief from the burden of tolls;
3. New businesses may elect not to locate in Vancouver because of the difficulty in recruiting workers and filling positions;
4. Potential new Vancouver residents may elect to settle in Oregon instead, to avoid tolls if any member of the household plans to work in Oregon, resulting in decreased property values in Vancouver; and
5. For the reasons described in numbered paragraph (1) above, more Vancouver residents may relocate to Oregon, resulting in a further decrease in property values in Vancouver.

Taking into consideration the numbers of people who currently commute between the two states, I ask the task force to carefully consider whether proposed tolls would have the apparently unanticipated effect of causing the very people who can best stimulate Vancouver's future growth and prosperity to flee Vancouver for other communities in order to avoid tolls. As an alternative, I urge the task force to consider whether the toll program can be restructured to impose tolls that are significantly lower than those currently described.

Thank you for your consideration.