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Columbia River Crossing

Ms. Heather Gundersen
Environmental Manager
Columbia River Crossing
700 Washington St., Suite 300
Vancouver, WA 98660

Dear Ms. Gundersen;

As Portland's official destination marketing office, Travel Portland is deeply interested in issues affecting access and travel throughout the region. As one of the major entry points for visitors coming to the Portland region and Oregon, the Columbia River Crossing is of particular significance. We appreciate the opportunity to comment on the draft environmental impact study for the Columbia River Crossing project.

Travel Portland's board-level Community Action Committee has been following this project and has identified the following priorities:

- We support the replacement bridge option over the supplemental bridge idea. The replacement bridge option offers better congestion relief, improves safety, improves salmon habitat, improves river navigation, and keeps traffic moving on the existing bridge while the new one is being built.
- We support light rail transit over bus rapid transit. The light rail option offers higher ridership levels, faster transit time, lower annual per-rider operating costs, and direct connections to the rest of the system at the Portland Expo Center. Light rail is also more attractive to visitors and can provide an efficient and exciting link between Portland and Vancouver, increasing tourism opportunities for both.

The Portland region receives worldwide attention and accolades for its transportation system—this attention is largely focused on light rail and streetcar systems. Adding this critical light rail link will enhance our reputation as a region with progressive, efficient and sustainable transportation infrastructure.

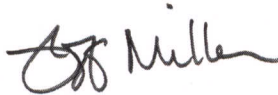
- We encourage the inclusion of ample bicycle/pedestrian access. Bi-state cycle tours are becoming increasingly popular, and the current access is both difficult and dangerous. If possible, bicycle/pedestrian facilities should be located on the east side of the bridge, which offers beautiful views of the river, Mount Hood, sailboats, etc.
- We are very concerned with some of the proposed Marine Drive alignments and their potential impact on the Portland Metropolitan Expo Center. How will the economic vitality of the Expo and the businesses around it be impacted with these alignments? How will the nearby wetlands be impacted? How would those impacts be minimized or mitigated?

- We are also concerned with the proposed license plate-recognition tolling system for visitors who don't have transponders in their cars. We believe it would be poor public relations for Portland and Oregon to have visitors receive a bill later for having visited our region. Our understanding is that other west-coast toll bridges, for example in the Bay Area, include on-site payment options for drivers who don't have fast-passes. We recommend including this option for the CRC.

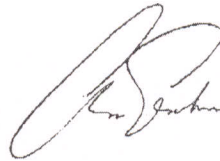
Visitors to our region spent \$3.6 billion in 2007 and supported 29,600 jobs, making the tourism/hospitality industry one of the area's key economic drivers. We urge you to seek solutions that both enhance the experiences of visitors and encourage continued travel and commerce between our states.

Thank you for the opportunity to bring the tourism industry's perspective to this discussion. Please let us know if there is any way we can be helpful in moving this project forward.

Sincerely,



Jeff Miller
President & CEO



Chris Erickson
Chair, Community Action Committee