From:	Douglas Kelso
To:	Columbia River Crossing;
CC:	
Subject:	Comments on Draft Environmental Impact Statement
Date:	Tuesday, July 01, 2008 4:36:40 PM
Attachments:	

The contemplated alternatives are wholly inadequate. The "supplemental bridge" as proposed clearly is designed as a place-holder; a way to pretend to consider alternatives by presenting one that has no possibility of going forward. In effect, this document rigs the process by presenting the favored alternative and no reasonable alternatives for evaluation.

An environmental impact statement is designed to force consideration of reasonable alternatives. Unless the environmental impact statement presents a serious, reasonable alternative, the entire process will be flawed.

The purpose stated of the project is to "a) improve travel safety and traffic operations on the Interstate 5 crossing's bridges and associated interchanges; b) improve connectivity, reliability, travel times and operations of public transportation modal alternatives in the BIA; c) improve highway freight mobility and address interstate travel and commerce needs in the BIA; and d) improve the Interstate 5 river crossing's structural integrity."

All of these goals ("improvement") can be achieved by congestion pricing on Interstate 5, turning one lane into an HOV/transit lane, improving the interchanges feeding into the bridge approach, and performing a seismic upgrade on the existing structure.

An even better approach is to create a serious "supplemental bridge" alternative and renovate the existing structures. However, no serious proposal for a supplemental bridge was set forth in the DEIS. A serious supplemental bridge alternative could involve either

(a) A six or eight lane elevated freeway bridge that carried three lanes of through traffic over the Columbia, with the two existing spans renovated for arterial traffic, bicycle traffic and transit, or

(b) A new arterial bridge to carry traffic between North Portland and downtown Vancouver as well as public transit and bicycle traffic.

As others have noted, the "bridge lift" issue can be addressed by adding a lift span to the

railroad bridge, allowing virtually all river traffic to pass beneath the hump of the existing bridge. The issue of moving freight up and down the West Coast can be addressed by routing the majority of freight traffic to I-205.

The DEIS attributes the current crash rate to "traffic congestion and weaving movements associated with closely spaced interchanges." Fixing the interchanges on the approach, banning lane changes on the bridges, and congestion pricing to reduce traffic should be able to reduce the accident rate without the need for a new bridge.

A separate arterial bridge could also handle traffic between Hwy 14 in Washington and Portland, thus potentially would allowing the removal of all freeway interchanges along I-5 between Mill Plain Boulevard and Marine Drive.

The DEIS is fatally flawed because it has not put forth a reasonable supplemental bridge option that effectively re-uses the current bridge. Such reasonable alternatives should be placed alongside what clearly is the "preferred alternative" (a single 12 lane freeway bridge plus new light rail bridge, with no arterial lanes) in order to compare several genuinely reasonable alternatives.

The current DEIS makes a mockery of the environmental impact process by offering one clearly preferred "alternative", three fake alternatives that are designed to be rejected, and "no action." There are other intermediate alternatives, including much less ambitious new bridges. The Final EIS should consider all reasonable alternatives.