From: evand@pacifier.com
To: Columbia River Crossing;
CC:
Subject: Comment from CRC DraftEIS Comments Page
Date: Sunday, June 29, 2008 9:49:39 PM
Attachments:

Home Zip Code: 97201
Work Zip Code: 97077

Person:
Other - Travel through the project area for recreation

Person commutes in the travel area via:
Bicycle

P-0518-001

1. In Support of the following bridge options:
Replacement Bridge
Do Nothing

2. In Support of the following High Capacity Transit options:
Light Rail between Vancouver and Portland

3. Support of Bus Rapid Transit or Light Rail by location:
Lincoln Terminus: Yes
Kiggins Bowl Terminus: Yes
Mill Plain (MOS) Terminus: Unsure
Clark College (MOS) Terminus: Unsure

Contact Information:
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Address: 1441 SW Clay #105
Portland, OR 97201

Comments:

P-0518-002

I'm concerned that the bike facilities provided in the CRC won't connect well to the bike

P-0518-001

Preferences for specific alternatives or options, as expressed in comments received before and after the issuance of the DEIS, were shared with local sponsor agencies to inform decision making. Following the close of the 60-day DEIS public comment period in July 2008, the CRC project's six local sponsor agencies selected a replacement I-5 bridge with light rail to Clark College as the project's Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA). These sponsor agencies, which include the Portland City Council, Vancouver City Council, TriMet Board, C-TRAN Board, Metro Council, RTC Board, considered the DEIS analysis, public comment, and a recommendation from the CRC Task Force when voting on the LPA.

With the LPA, new bridges will replace the existing Interstate Bridges to carry I-5 traffic, light rail, pedestrians and bicyclists across the Columbia River. Light rail will extend from the Expo Center MAX Station in Portland to a station and park and ride at Clark College in Vancouver. Pedestrians and bicyclists would travel along a wider and safer path than exists today.

For a more detailed description of highway, transit, and bicycle and pedestrian improvements associated with the LPA, see Chapter 2 of the FEIS.

P-0518-002

The new 16-foot wide multi-use path would extend to the Marine Drive interchange, connecting to the Expo Center light rail station and the light rail bridge over North Portland Harbor. These new trails would provide safer and more direct bicycle and pedestrian connections than the circuitous paths that exist in and through the Marine Drive interchange today. These improvements will complement any future bicycle and pedestrian improvements that PDOT and/or ODOT may make in the future outside the project area.

P-0518-002 infrastructure in Portland. While I applaud, and support, the CRC's goals of providing good bike infrastructure in the CRC project area, I worry that the existing substandard bike connections between the expo center and Interstate Avenue will keep cyclists from using the bikeways. Getting from the expo center to the corner of Interstate and Victory is very problematic. And traveling Interstate between Victory and Columbia is also daunting, even though there are bike lanes. Although this area is outside the CRC area, improvements are needed to help the CRC become a success. PDOT and/or ODOT should commit to improvements in this area to complement the CRC.

P-0518-003 I'm also wondering what steps will be taken to ensure that the tolling remains in place. Although needed to fund the project and to manage VMT and sprawl, tolling will be unpopular. I'd expect that as soon as tolling is introduced, some people will advocate for the end of tolling. For example, the Building Industry Association of Washington, a powerful group that opposes government actions that limit construction, would have strong financial motivations to end tolling (either through the legislatures or ballot measures), as that would increase sprawl. Such a change would be financially crippling, but voters in Oregon and Washington have a history of passing fiscally irresponsible ballot measures. A tolling agreement should contain safeguards to guarantee that tolling extends through the financing period.

P-0518-004 I'm also curious about the pricing strategy for tolling. There are supplemental benefits to tolling, such as reductions in congestion and pollution. Will the toll pricing strategy formally consider those benefits? It should. It's easy to imagine a pricing strategy that focuses only on maximizing revenue, and does so by setting a relatively low price and tolling a relatively large number of vehicles. That would not do enough to manage congestion and avoid pollution. Additionally, the benefits from reduced pollution would

P-0518-005 be diminished by tolling I-5 but not I-205, as people would drive farther to avoid the toll. Both bridges should be tolled.

P-0518-003

The authority to toll the I-5 crossing is set by federal and state laws. Federal statutes permit a toll-free bridge on an interstate highway to be converted to a tolled facility following the reconstruction or replacement of the bridge, and the CRC project would meet these conditions. Prior to tolling I-5, Washington and Oregon Departments of Transportation (WSDOT and ODOT) would have to enter into a toll agreement with the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT). State legislation from 2008 in Washington permits WSDOT to toll I-5 provided that the tolling of the facility is first authorized by the Washington legislature. Once authorized by the legislature, the Washington Transportation Commission has the authority to set the toll rates. In Oregon, the Oregon Transportation Commission has the authority to toll a facility and to set the toll rates. It is anticipated that prior to tolling I-5, ODOT and WSDOT would enter into a bi-state tolling agreement to establish a cooperative process for imposing tolls, set toll rates, and guide the use of toll revenues.

P-0518-004

The goal of "variable-rate tolling" is to reduce congestion and maximize the flow of traffic through this corridor. A lower toll is charged when traffic demand is lower than when the corridor is at its highest demand. Because a toll is charged by time of day, variable-rate tolling gives travelers an incentive to change travel times, reduce optional trips, take an alternate route, or choose transit as an alternative to driving alone. Experiences in other cities in the U.S. and around the world have shown that these fees can help reduce congestion and improve the performance of the roadway.

Regarding air quality, the evaluation presented in the DEIS assessed how the project would affect emissions of pollutants regulated by state and federal standards. Oregon and Washington, as well as the federal government, have ambient air quality standards. These standards are based on human health, and provide thresholds that indicate when

concentrations of a pollutant could pose a health risk. This evaluation included an analysis to demonstrate this project would allow the region to retain conformity with state and federal air quality standards for Carbon Monoxide (CO). The CO analysis analyzed potential CO impacts at intersections where traffic volumes would be affected by the project. See the Air Quality Technical Report for a detailed explanation of the state and federal regulations concerning air quality and the evaluation of whether this project could affect compliance with these regulations. See Chapter 3 (Section 3.10) of the DEIS for an explanation of the pollutants regulated by state and federal law.

The evaluation in the DEIS found "that future (no-build or build) emissions of all pollutants would be substantially lower than existing emissions for the region and the subareas" (page 3-277). These reductions in emissions are largely the result of on-going reductions in vehicle emissions that will occur with or without the project, and are based on relatively standard assumptions regarding future vehicles and fuel. The anticipated vehicle emission reductions are based largely on regulated improvements in fleet fuel efficiency standards, and regulated improvements related to cleaner gasoline and diesel fuels. Any extraordinary improvements in fuel efficiency or fuels would result in even greater emission reductions.

Projected reductions in vehicle fleet emissions would result in a 25% to 90% reduction in pollutants over existing conditions, even with the anticipated growth in population, employment and VMT. In addition, the build alternatives would generally provide further reductions in vehicle emissions at the regional level and for some of the sub-areas along I-5. Emissions would be slightly higher with the project than with No-Build in some sub-areas, as discussed in the DEIS Chapter 3 (Section 3.10) and the FEIS Chapter 3 (Section 3.10).

P-0518-005

Tolling I-205 is not part of this project, but could be implemented separately if Oregon and Washington, in partnership with the Federal Highway Administration, determine it is needed to advance regional transportation objectives. Traffic modeling indicates that tolling I-5, but not I-205, would divert some traffic to I-205. However, under existing and No-build conditions, trips already, and would continue to, divert to I-205 because of the unreliability and congestion in the I-5 corridor. With the CRC improvements to I-5, many of those diverted trips would shift back to I-5 because it would be a shorter and more reliable trip than I-205. Tolling the I-5 crossing causes some trips to shift to I-205 in order to avoid the toll. Thus the net difference in the number of trips crossing on I-205 is only slightly higher with the CRC project as without it. Chapter 3 (Section 3.1) of the DEIS discusses the effects of the project on traffic levels in the I-5 and I-205 corridors.