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 Section: Draft Environmental Impact Statement
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Comment or Question:
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 VANCOUVER
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June 30, 2008

Mayor Royce Pollard
 Vancouver City Council
 City of Vancouver Representatives
 Columbia River Crossing Staff

O-012-001 AIA Vancouver, the local component of the American Institute of Architects, represents the views of our member Architects and designers living and working in the community. We recognize the importance of the Columbia River Crossing Project (CRC) to the future economic vitality and transportation needs of the region. As designers of the built environment, we clearly understand the necessity to balance functionality, form, and budget, but we are also concerned with issues of livability, sustainability, and quality of design in our community. This project is far too significant to have a purely



O-012-001

The CRC project design for interchanges, roadway elements, transit stations, and other facilities will be context-sensitive and reflect the unique character of the surrounding area. CRC formed a 14-member, bi-state Urban Design Advisory Group (UDAG), made up of design professionals and neighborhood representatives. All UDAG meetings are open to the public to attend and observe. Goals of the UDAG include achieving “design excellence that can be embraced by affected communities and users” and providing “a landmark bridge that is both inspired and inspiring and fully integrates the design and function of the structure with the urban design elements.” Working closely with project designers, UDAG will provide input and guidance on integrating the new facilities with the surrounding community. This work includes identifying significant iconography (for example, symbols and patterns) that will reflect the history of the area, the Native American communities, early pioneers, or other significant themes. These images will be incorporated into an art master plan. Additional discussion of bridge designs can be found in Chapter 2 of the FEIS and in the Visual and Aesthetics Technical Report supporting the FEIS.

- O-012-001** “engineering” solution. The design guidelines which have been developed as part of the CRC process can help craft the appropriate solution, if they are used as intended.
- O-012-002** AIA Vancouver supports the Draft EIS with the preferred Alternative No. 3, replacement bridge(s) with light rail, and we ask for your support as decision makers in the process to include the following additional considerations in the Final Report to ensure that the Crossing provides the greatest benefit to the communities it will serve and to future generations.
- O-012-003** 1. Community Economic Impact Study: we recommend that the Final Environmental Impact Statement include an economic analysis of the impact of the bridge on the City of Vancouver. That is, a study that answers key economic questions: Does the capacity of the bridge ensure the flow of commerce? Or does it encourage jobs and businesses to move to Portland? Does it ease congestion, or does it facilitate longer commuter trips and sprawl? The cost for the bridge will be split between Vancouver and Portland, but the split will be unequal. Vancouver has more miles of freeway improvements. Vancouver has four interchanges that require improvement; Portland has two. All four alternatives require three to five new transit stations in Vancouver. The crossing will directly and immediately affect Vancouver’s redeveloping downtown. And the majority of the tolling will come from Vancouver commuters. The City of Vancouver may have much to lose from more people commuting into Portland, to shop, work, and pay income tax. A study needs to be included to determine if the capacity of the Crossing is appropriate to ensure real economic benefit.
- O-012-004** 2. Sustainability: The Portland metropolitan area is known for being one of the “greenest” places in the country. The materials from the existing bridge must be recycled and re-used in a manner that serves to honor and educate. The opportunity to generate power should be included. What a shame it would be to have a Crossing that wastes the wind from the Gorge and the power of the Columbia River waters. What better way to symbolize the region than to have the vital link across the region be a showpiece of sustainability, perhaps a bridge that powers itself? The increased carbon emissions from additional trips should be offset by trees and landscaping planted along the Crossing and its interchanges. The water that runs off the bridge should be treated and returned to the river. We urge that these concepts of sustainability be included in the chosen alternative and be given a high priority
- O-012-005** that is not “value engineered” out of the final construction. We owe it to future generations.
- O-012-006**
- O-012-007**
- O-012-008**
- O-012-009** 3. Community Connection: the replacement bridge will be higher and significantly wider than the existing bridge. We need to ensure that the East and West sides of downtown Vancouver and Jantzen Beach/Hayden Island are not further divided by the Interstate. We need a

O-012-002

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.

O-012-003

The construction of the CRC project is not intended to be a substitute for creating jobs in Clark County. The project’s improvements for freight, reliability and transit access are expected to stimulate economic activity and job growth. The economic analysis indicates that job growth in Vancouver and at the Port of Vancouver will benefit from the project. The construction of the project itself will also provide jobs to workers in Clark County. Vancouver, Clark County, the Columbia River Economic

- O-012-009** final design that pays special attention to the urban design of the areas under the bridge and ensures that connections over and under it are safe, pedestrian and bike friendly, and help to bind communities together rather than separate them. We request that the guidelines set forth by the Urban Design Advisory Groups and the
- O-012-010** CRCA be adopted.
- O-012-011** 4. Trip Reduction: we ask that the final design of the chosen alternative give at least equal importance to the goal of trip reduction as to the goal of increased capacity. The draft study includes bus or light rail and tolling to pay for the bridge. This may discourage single-occupancy vehicle use, but the Final Statement needs to study the effects of other options such as reduced tolls for car pools, express lanes, etc. We need to explore options that will not just provide, but actually encourage mass transit and set a goal for trip reduction.
- O-012-012** 5. Preferred Transit Terminus: AIA Vancouver supports the connection of mass transit into downtown Vancouver, but we are concerned about the scale of both options as they make their way through historic and very tiny neighborhoods. We are also concerned about the economic disruption to the fragile, still redeveloping downtown. We support the Kiggins Bowl terminus option that makes use of the existing I-5 right-of-way and generally routes through larger streets. We also ask that as the final design will likely be built in phases for budget considerations, that flexibility be left in the design for connection to a possible future streetcar system which is more appropriate in scale to the downtown neighborhoods. And very important to downtown Vancouver, we ask that the final design allow for Main Street to one day reconnect all the way to the river.
- O-012-013** 6. Design: The final design needs to make a statement about crossing such an important body of water and connecting communities in two different states. It needs to be designed as a whole system that recognizes that there are several different crossings, each with its own design criteria and identity. And each transportation experience, be it vehicular crossing, transit crossing, pedestrian overpass, bicycle underpass, needs to be carefully designed. The Urban Design Advisory Groups and the CRCA have been working on design guidelines to ensure that the new Crossing is more than just a freeway over the river. These guidelines need to be adopted into the Final EIS.
- O-012-014** We thank the project committees for all their work on the draft EIS and again voice our support. We now ask that the above considerations be added to the Final Statement to ensure that the Columbia River Crossing reaches its full potential and achieves our highest goals for the future.

Sincerely,
Kalina J Kunert, President

Development Council, and other organizations work together to increase the jobs to population ratio in Clark County.

O-012-004

Many decisions regarding construction materials and practices will depend on decisions regarding design, contracting, material availability and pricing, and other factors that cannot be finalized at this phase of project planning. However, Chapter 3 (Sections 3.12, 3.18, and 3.19) of the FEIS discusses sustainable construction practices and techniques that could be employed by the project to reduce the project's "carbon footprint". These and other options will be considered as the project moves forward into final design and construction, in order to reduce GHG emissions during construction. Chapter 3 (Section 3.19) of the FEIS also discusses how the LPA would have lower emissions from operations than the No-Build Alternative.

O-012-005

The possibility of generating energy within the project right of way will continue to be considered and evaluated during the final design phase.

O-012-006

Including trees on the new bridge was considered but dropped. However, trees would likely be planted in a variety of other locations in the ROW. Landscape plans will be developed during the Final Design phase after the Record of Decision.

O-012-007

As discussed in Chapter 3 (Section 3.14), the conceptual stormwater management design prepared for the FEIS analysis largely consists of gravity pipe drainage systems that would collect and convey runoff from the new bridges, transit guideway, and road improvements. Stormwater treatment facilities would reduce total suspended solids (TSS),

particulates, and dissolved metals to current regulatory standards before runoff reaches surface waters.

O-012-008

See responses to -004, -005, -006, and -007 above.

O-012-009

The replacement bridge would increase the physical width of the I-5 alignment through Vancouver, but would not decrease connectivity. Several aspects of the project would increase connectivity between downtown Vancouver on the west side of I-5 and the Historic Reserve as well as other areas east of I-5. For example, the extension of LRT to Clark College provides a direct connection between the east and west sides of I-5. In addition, with the various mitigation measures proposed, and the Evergreen Community Connection and other access improvements as described Chapter 2 of the FEIS, the project would result in better physical connectivity.

O-012-010

Thank you very much for your input. The UDAG guidelines, as well as guidelines from numerous other municipal and other sources, have and will be used as designs are completed. The UDAG guidelines have also been included as mitigation for visual impacts, ensuring that they will be used to address design refinements, material choices, landscaping, and other elements not yet finalized.

O-012-011

Many well coordinated TDM/TSM programs are already in place in the Portland-Vancouver Metropolitan region and supported by agencies and adopted plans. In most cases, the impetus for the programs is from state-mandated programs: Oregon's Employee Commute Options rule and Washington's Commute Trip Reduction law.

The physical and operational elements of the CRC project provide the greatest TDM opportunities by promoting other modes to fulfill more of the travel needs in the project corridor. These include: major new light rail line in exclusive right-of-way, as well as express bus and feeder routes; modern bicycle and pedestrian facilities that accommodate more bicyclists and pedestrians, and improve connectivity, safety, and travel time; park and ride lots and garages; and a variable toll on the highway crossing.

In addition to these fundamental elements of the project, facilities and equipment would be implemented that could help existing or expanded TSM programs maximize capacity and efficiency of the system. These include: replacement or expanded variable message signs or other traveler information systems in the CRC project area; expanded incident response capabilities; queue jumps or bypass lanes for transit vehicles and other designated vehicles where multi-lane approaches are provided at ramp signals for entrance ramps; and expanded traveler information systems with additional traffic monitoring equipment and cameras.

The CRC project has crafted a multi-pronged TDM program to address capacity demands during construction of the project. The program promotes alternate modes of transportation for those crossing the bridge and includes increased carpool, vanpool and transit options and promotion of pedestrian and bicycle trips.

O-012-012

Many different options for addressing the project's Purpose and Need were evaluated in a screening process prior to the development and evaluation of the alternatives in the DEIS. Options eliminated through the screening process included a new corridor crossing over the Columbia River (in addition to I-5 and I-205), an arterial crossing between Hayden Island and downtown Vancouver, a tunnel under the Columbia River,

and various modes of transit other than light rail and bus rapid transit. Section 2.5 of the DEIS explains why a third corridor, arterial crossing, and several transit modes evaluated in screening were dropped from further consideration because they did not meet the Purpose and Need. For a general description of the screening process see Chapter 2 (Section 2.7) of the FEIS. It should be noted that every proposal received from the public was considered, and many of the proposals that were dropped from further consideration included elements that helped shape the alternatives in the DEIS.

Following the close of the 60-day DEIS public comment period in July 2008, the CRC project's six local sponsor agencies selected light rail to Clark College as the project's preferred transit mode. These sponsor agencies, which include the Vancouver City Council, Portland City Council, C-TRAN Board, TriMet Board, RTC Board and Metro Council considered the DEIS analysis, public comment, and a recommendation from the CRC Task Force (a broad group of stakeholders representative of the range of interests affected by the project - see the DEIS Public Involvement Appendix for more information regarding the CRC Task Force) before voting on the LPA.

As illustrated in the DEIS, and summarized in Exhibit 29 (page S-33) of the Executive Summary, light rail would better serve transit riders than bus rapid transit (BRT) within the CRC project area. Light rail would carry more passengers across the river during the PM peak, result in more people choosing to take transit, faster travel times through the project area, fewer potential noise impacts, and lower costs per incremental rider than BRT. Additionally, light rail is more likely to attract desirable development on Hayden Island and in downtown Vancouver, which is consistent with local land use plans.

Following the selection of the LPA in July of 2008, the CRC enlisted the help of community members - residents, business owners, transit-

dependent populations and commuters - who had interest in light rail planning to form the Vancouver Working Group (VWG). The VWG met regularly to develop recommendations and provided feedback to the CRC project, the City of Vancouver and C-TRAN on transit alignments, proposed station locations and design, security and park and ride facilities in downtown Vancouver. For more information on the transit alignment decision-making process please see Chapter 2 (Section 2.7) of the FEIS.

The LPA allows for Main Street to reconnect to SE Columbia Way on the river.

O-012-013

The recommendations of the UDAG have been used in the analysis of potential design alternatives and options. These recommendations, and their application to the final design, are discussed in the FEIS in Section 3.9.

O-012-014

Thank you for taking the time to submit your comments on the I-5 CRC DEIS.