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Columbia River Crossing

State of Washington
DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE

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Main Office Location: Natural Resources Building • 1111 Washington Street SE • Olympia, WA

June 25, 2008

Columbia River Crossing
c/o Heather Gundersen
700 Washington Street, Suite 300
Vancouver, Washington 98660

Dear Ms. Gundersen:

S-002-001

The Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) appreciates the opportunity to participate in the Columbia River Crossing committees, and to review the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for the Interstate Columbia River Crossing Project. The Columbia River Crossing presents complex issues and challenges for addressing transportation needs and the environmental impacts of the bridge. WSDOT has brought together diverse expertise, has worked conscientiously to develop solutions and a range of alternatives. Overall the work on this project and the DEIS is commendable.

S-002-002

WDFW through the InterCEP group has established early coordination through meetings and concurrence points. Your commitment to first avoid and then minimize unavoidable impacts to ecosystem, fish and wildlife is a high priority for WDFW hydraulic permitting. The DEIS is based on conceptual designs, therefore specific avoidance, minimization and mitigation measures will be further explored as this project develops and is closer to the actual permitting stage.

S-002-003

Recommended Preferred Alternative: From the perspective of providing the highest level of environmental protection for fish and wildlife WDFW is supportive of two of the proposed five alternatives:

> Alternative 3: Replacement Crossing with Light Rail
> Alternative 2: Replacement Crossing with Bus Rapid Transit.

S-002-004

Within each of these alternatives there is a "Stacked Transit/ Highway Bridge" option that would require only two new bridges. This design option is preferred by WDFW as the least environmentally damaging to fish life.

If there is additional information we can provide, please contact me at (360) 902-2575

Sincerely,

Teresa A. Eturaspe

Teresa A. Eturaspe
WDFW Responsible Official
SEPA/NEPA Coordinator

cc: Tim Rymer, RHPM
        Anne Friesz, RHPM

S-002-001

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

S-002-002

Thank you for your involvement in InterCEP. Please see Chapters 3.14 and 3.16 of the FEIS for discussion of relevant avoidance, minimization, and mitigation measures.

S-002-003

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.

S-002-004

The Stacked Transit/Highway Bridge (STHB) option, which would allow transit, bicyclists, and pedestrians to travel beneath the highway deck, was included as part of the LPA.

The STHB is described in greater detail in Chapter 2 (Section 2.2) of the FEIS. Impacts associated with a STHB are discussed throughout Chapter 3.