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Columbia River Crossing

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June 23, 2008

Columbia River Crossing  
c/o Heather Gundersen  
700 Washington St., Suite 300  
Vancouver, WA 98660



**RE: Columbia River Crossing Draft Environmental Impact Statement, Public Comment**

Dear Ms. Gundersen:

**L-008-001** This letter is written to provide formal written comment from the Port of Ridgefield regarding the Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the Columbia River Crossing project.

The Port of Ridgefield supports the Columbia River Crossing Project (CRC), because we believe it is in the public's interest to ensure adequate, reliable commuter and freight capacity on I-5 and the bridges that cross the Columbia.

**L-008-002** The Port believes the existing bridges are aged and were not designed to accommodate current and projected future traffic demand, environmental, safety and seismic engineering standards. Unless replaced, these design issues will continue to pose significant safety hazards for both drivers river users. Replacing the existing I-5 bridges would also enable the efficient flow of freight and people by addressing congestion, capacity and safety compromises that currently exist and will worsen over time.


The Port believes that public transit should be an integral component of the crossing design in order to accommodate and promote efficient, cost effective transit crossings that will meet the public's demand for transit well into the future. Retrofitting the capacity for Light Rail Transit onto a replacement bridge at a future date would be much more expensive and present many more engineering challenges than building the future capacity into a replacement bridge, and would be an inefficient use of taxpayer dollars. In the lifespan of the proposed new bridge, the extension of Portland's Light Rail Transit system into Clark County may prove to be in the public's best interest; however initial operation of light rail may not be required or desirable when the new bridge is opened.

**L-008-003**

**L-008-004** Finally, the Port of Ridgefield supports thorough evaluation of necessity, timing and costs associated with specific project components (i.e. individual intersection improvements) prior to their inclusion in the construction schedule and cost estimates.

Thank you for your time and please include the Port of Ridgefield on correspondence related to this project.

Sincerely,

  
Brent A. Grening  
Executive Director

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### L-008-001

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

### L-008-002

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.

### L-008-003

Please see response to comment L-008-002.

Annual light rail passenger trips crossing the I-5 bridge in 2030 are projected to be 6.1 million, with daily ridership around 18,700. The travel time for the morning commute by light rail between downtown Vancouver

and Pioneer Square in downtown Portland will be approximately 34 minutes. Light rail would travel on a dedicated right-of-way, with more reliable travel times than auto drivers dealing with unpredictable road conditions, traffic congestion, and parking challenges.

The CRC project planning for light rail incorporates and supports the principles of the Vancouver's City Center Vision Plan. Downtown Vancouver has seen recent growth in higher density mixed use projects from three to 12 stories in height. In addition, another 4,000 downtown condominiums are proposed or pending as part of new developments. The core of Vancouver has, along with many of the larger corridors such as Fourth Plain Blvd, medium to high density residential development and an urban mix of uses. Transit demand in these areas is quite high, and ridership will increase with the introduction of light rail.

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

**L-008-004**

Thank you for your suggestion. As you know, the project reevaluated many components in 2009. This resulted in design refinements at Marine Drive, Hayden Island, SR 500 and elsewhere.