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MEETING MINUTES

Project Name: CRC **Project No.:** 2733012004
Location: Clark County **Meeting Date:** June 24, 2008 **Time:**
Minutes by: Katie Clements
Attendees: **Company:**

Subject: CRC Task Force Public Meeting: Hearing Testimony

Henry Hewitt: I'm Henry Hewitt, one of the co-chairs of the Columbia River Crossing Task Force and Hal, the other co-chair, agreed early on that we would alternate who was going to chair which meetings and we would alternate meetings between Oregon and Washington but as it's turned out, the last several meetings have been in Washington. He told me it was my turn to chair the meeting so here I am. I'd like to welcome everybody and we do know that there's some problem on the I-5 highway on the Oregon side that's causing traffic delays and that people will probably be late in arriving, particularly those people coming from that direction. The reason for getting started is that at about 4:15 Gov. Gregoire is gonna call in and has a few words that she'd like to give with respect to the project and where we are and I think we at least want to be attentive for that for those of us that are here. In the meantime we'll get started with some of the formalities. Please turn off your cell phones. I've turned mine off and it tends to cause disruption with the technology if we leave the cell phones on. As always, our meeting tonight will be broadcast on CVTV and in Portland on the community media. You can watch the Task Force meetings on the internet through the link to the project (LINK). We have materials that have been distributed and we have a lot of paper tonight. Hopefully everyone either has a copy or can share with somebody who does. By way of background, we began this process in I think the February timeframe of 2006. I was asked to be co-chair and was told it would be a year and a half or two years of meetings, once a quarter. Well here we are more than 3 years later and my notes tell me this is the 23rd meeting, so that's more frequently than quarterly and longer than 2 years. Tonight we will hear a project update, get public input received on the DEIS, there will be time for public comments

We have people signed up and once again I would ask that you to be as brief as you can be and in any event we'll cut you off or have you close down at about 3 minutes so that we can get all the people that we have signed up in the allotted time and excuse me if I mispronounce names. The first person we have is Steve Citron.

Steve Citron: Thank you. My name is Steve Citron and I am a Vancouver resident. I am a PhD Engineer and a fellow of the Society of Automotive Engineers. I am concerned and my comments reflect an interest in congestion over the new bridge compared to the No Build option. So, very simply, one of the statements from CRC is that

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Joe Cortright: I think we're at a point in the CRC process that you have before you in that DEIS fails to meet the requirements of both the letter and the spirit of NEPA and I think what you've done or at the risk of doing is taking an action that really endangers what you think you want to do in terms of building a new bridge. There are 2 key requirements in NEPA. One is that you look at reasonable alternatives and two, that you engage the public in a meaningful dialogue about those alternatives. Your process hasn't done either of those. In terms of reasonable alternatives, we basically have two: do nothing or build a big bridge and transit. You systematically ruled out all of the intermediate opportunities including a transit only alternative, including HOV, including transportation demand management. You ignored the Oregon Transportation Commission's own policy 1G that says you will look at those low cost measures before considering a big project. That's the first point. Second, this project is clearly now designed, however it was conceived, is now designed for world that no longer exists. All of your modeling, all of your projections, all of your assumptions were designed in a world of \$1.10 gasoline and no concern about carbon dioxide. We know those things have changed. Travel is going down, travel on this bridge is going down it has gone down for each of the last 3 years. Gasoline consumption is going down. The assumptions that are built in to this project in terms of land use and travel behavior are demonstrably wrong. Relying on this document and those projections leads you in a mistaken direction. We learned, thanks to the Oregonian on Sunday, that you've simply ignored the issue of induced demand. Induced demand, which has been a feature of EISs in this region for more than 35 years and you've simply assumed it away which biases the analysis. On your process, I'm really concerned that we have not had the opportunity to have a meaningful dialogue about the issues here. We've been shunted into these 3 minute little snippets and you're going to be making a decision today on the LPA before the comment period has even closed. So those of us who have taken the time to read through the EIS, to identify faults with it, and point them out to you, you will not know what our objections are because you nor your staff will not have heard them yet because you have not allowed the time for them. And you will be making that decision, as will others, before all the information of available. That is not a credible process and that is not consistent with NEPA. And finally, and I want to suggest that you ask your staff and other to stop repeating demonstrably false information. I could develop a litany here to but we have regrettably the Gov. of Washington said just a few months ago that this is the most accident prone corridor in either Oregon or Washington. That's not true and your staff knows it, ODOT knows it, their own data shows that the accident data on the Fremont bridge is higher than this and there are a litany of other examples like this and that is just one example of how we have not had the opportunity to correct things that are demonstrably false.

Eric Nussbaum: I'm here on behalf of AORTA, the Association of Oregon Rail and Transit Advocates. This is your last chance to turn around a runaway project. The last chance to implement a legacy that is a real leading edge, real green, sustainable transportation solution across the Columbia River. This project will fail. It'll fail because of the cost, the region won't be able to afford it and because of the great risk of a challenge under NEPA as Mr. Cortright already told you about. The fact you've only gotten conditional support from other agencies such as the City of Portland, Metro, Portland Planning Commission, Commission on Sustainability, all of them had conditions on their support for the front runner of these so-called options. You've been misled in a number of different ways. The first way is that you're being told that you only have until August 15 to make a decision on the LPA. That is not true. August 15 is the deadline for FTA New Starts and has to do with light rail only, it happens every year, if you don't put it in this year, you'll get the chance next year. It has nothing to do with the 6 year transportation authorization and so you've been told that you if you miss this opportunity in August that you'll have to wait for 6 year to get funding. That is a falsification. You've been told that there is a projected need for 40% increase in traffic in the area. That's not true either. That's in your purpose and need statement and it is not true. There's no way this region could produce 40% more traffic. You were misled about tolling of existing facilities. Your staff changed their mind about that but most people are still walking around saying we can't toll on existing interstate facilities. That's not true—read the statute. The DIES does not meet the minimum requirements for a broad range of options. Right now you have basically two big bridge alternatives: one is a big, big bridge and one is a half big bridge, that's your supplemental bridge. That's not going to be enough for NEPA. Finally, there's been a very narrow definition

O-030-001

Significant work has gone into developing the CRC project, including an ongoing public involvement effort. The public involvement program includes numerous advisory groups to ensure the values and interests of the community are reflected in project decisions. These groups include representatives of public agencies, businesses, civic organizations, neighborhoods and freight, commuter and environmental groups. Feedback from the general public and advisory groups has been generally supportive of the project, including support for the transit, bicycle, pedestrian, highway, interchange, and financing elements of the project. See Chapter 2 (Section 2.7) of the FEIS for more discussion on the process used to develop project alternatives and select a Locally Preferred Alternative.

O-030-002

It is important that a project, such as CRC, provide ample opportunity for input from a diverse constituency of stakeholders and jurisdictions, and that it follow a process that complies with all federal, state and local legal requirements. The project sponsors intent is to progress at a deliberate pace to ensure that we meet public interests, meet the transportation needs, address the quality of local communities and the environment, and be financially and fiscally responsible. Following publication of the FEIS, there will be a record of decision. If that decision is to move forward with one of the build alternatives, then the sponsors will progress into final engineering, finance plan implementation, and then construction.

O-030-003

By 2030, the region's population is expected to increase by one million people. This increase will result in more people needing to travel between home, work, school, recreation, etc. In 2005, 135,000 vehicles crossed the Columbia River on the Interstate Bridge, which led to 4-6 hours of congestion each weekday. By 2030, 184,000 are predicted to

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O-030-005 of what is the I-5 corridor. There have been several promising, viable alternatives thrown out by your staff because they said it was not in the I-5 corridor including a supplemental arterial bridge and I have citations in the document that was passed around. I hope it got all the way around, I made 40 copies. If you didn't get it, talk to somebody next to you. This bridge was cast out partly because for the reason that it was not in the I-5 corridor. That is just... A corridor is something more than the pavement on I-5, so check back at those options that were removed from further consideration because you'll see them in a number of places. So again I ask you to stop this process, and to call for a supplemental DEIS to deal with the issues raised, not only by us but by the other local jurisdictions that have already spoken before you move forward. You do not have to meet the August 15 deadline.

Bill Hidden: My great-grandfather supported the first bridge in the 1800s and finally in 1917 it got built. I am a property owner, I live in the area and I will be greatly affected by this process but I want to tell you that I am in support of a replacement bridge and I commend your work. Thank you. I am sending a letter regarding the EIS and how it affects my property and a few minor shortcomings. Hopefully, you will be able to address those and correct them but move ahead. Thank you.

Larry Epstein representing Diversified Marine: After providing public testimony, this commenter specifically stated that their testimony was intended for the Task Force only, and requested that their comments not be considered to be formal comments on the Draft EIS.

David Rowe: I live in Battle Ground, Washington. I do not want to pay a \$2 toll to cross the Columbia. I have been working in Gresham and driving 60 miles a day. My gas alone is 2 gallons per day which computes to about 1,000 gallons per year. Today I will be paying almost \$5k per year and with the proposed toll that would add almost another \$1k per year. As a taxpayer and a father, I do not want to give my kids such burden to pay for a \$4 billion bridge. Do not build such an expensive bridge. I believe the light rail connection is important but look at other options other than highway expansion. There are other options other than the 12 lane bridge and that is to expand rail transportation. On June 17, Amtrak finished an 11 mile project. They replaced a rail bridge between Boston and New Haven which crossed the Thames River plus they upgraded 11 miles of track. This whole project cost \$83 million, that's spelled with an M. The Northern Santa Fe Railroad bridge could be upgraded to a 3 track bridge. That inexpensive project could provide a corridor for high-speed trains from Portland to Seattle with 1.5 hour travel time plus it would provide a corridor for commuter trains from Vancouver, Ridgefield, La Center, Battle Ground, Camas and Washougal. Do not more pollution to our area with more cars.

Beth Cortorolo: I am President of the Greater Vancouver Chamber of Commerce. The Chamber has been engaged in the work of the Task Force since its inception in 2005. After reviewing the findings of the team and other research, our board has voted to support the alternative of the replacement bridge with light rail. We recognize that this will mean a tremendous investment along the vital I-5 corridor. We would of course as we move forward like to see costs to businesses and the public minimized but we also asked the question: what's the cost of doing nothing? We think the answer, in terms of more restrictions on freight mobility and further traffic congestion is simply not acceptable. Thank you very much for your work on the project and for your time today.

cross the river, which would lead to 15 hours of daily congestion if no action is taken.

Congestion occurs when vehicle demand is greater than a transportation system's capacity. It results in slower speeds and increased travel times. CRC defines congestion as vehicles traveling less than 30 mph. The Columbia River Crossing project uses information gathered from Metro's nationally-recognized travel demand models to determine the project's effect on congestion. These models predict trip frequency, types or modes of transportation, destination, and time of day. Transportation planners use these models to analyze the effects of such factors as increased population and employment, transportation improvements, and new developments on the transportation system.

Based on the Metro model's past ability to predict transportation effects, the CRC project is confident in the data received from Metro and uses it to determine what impact the project will have on congestion. The improvements proposed by the project to the highway and seven interchanges will help better accommodate increased future vehicle traffic. New auxiliary lanes and longer on/off ramps will allow safer and more efficient merging and weaving to enter or exit the freeway. Narrow lanes and shoulders will be widened to current standards. Shoulders will be added where they are currently missing. All of these changes will improve the flow of traffic in the bottleneck area of the Interstate Bridge.

O-030-004

Modeling has indicated that tolling I-5 without making the improvements that are part of the CRC project would not meet the project's Purpose and Need. This does not mean that some form of tolling prior to constructing CRC couldn't be implemented. The ultimate decision on any tolling options will be made by both the Washington and Oregon Transportation Commissions.

O-030-005

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.

More broadly, extensive technical and public review and input has been included in all phases of the CRC project, from developing a purpose and need statement, screening a wide variety of alternatives, and developing a Draft and Final EIS. This process met the requirements and intent of NEPA law and has resulted in a DEIS and FEIS that are complete and sound.