

From: [Stephen Houston](#)
To: [Columbia River Crossing](#)
CC:
Subject: Proposed Bridge Project
Date: Monday, June 30, 2008 8:35:53 PM
Attachments:

P-0723-001 More than 15 years ago, I was a member of the Transportation Futures Committee and the only member to be given a "Perfect Attendance Award" by Mayor Pollard. One of our strongest conclusions was that building more roads would not reduce congestion in the long run, but only increase our reliance on the single occupancy vehicle mode of transportation we've had for the better part of the last 75 years. This reliance needed to be reduced, especially by our use of mass transit and clever planning of our cities to encourage mass transit's efficiency. At the time, we knew nothing of global warming, peak oil, or had any dream that gas prices could skyrocket as they recently have done. Armed with this new data, and our earlier conclusions, I would urge the following be done.

P-0723-002 1. Replace the bridge. Most engineers will tell you it is far easier to design and build a structure to withstand the earthquake and other forces that will be put on it when it is built up to modern codes, with modern techniques and materials. If the old bridge is kept, we'll keep all of its continuing maintenance headaches and shortfalls. The bridge capacity should be the same as now, three travel lanes in both directions, with emergency lanes that would minimize the disruptions caused by any accidents. Bicycle and pedestrian paths...large ones...should of course be included.

P-0723-003

P-0723-004

P-0723-005 2. Decrease reliance on the car and put in the light rail. Opponents state that busses are more efficient, but busses are small, and easy to remove if economic times get tough and cutbacks have to ensue. Once light rail is in place, it is there permanently and allows for development around it, thus improving its efficiency and allowing us to rebuild our cities for people rather than cars. Light rail can operate on electricity generated by wind, hydro, thermal, nuclear, or solar. Busses can only operate on diesel, and whether fossil or bio, add more carbon dioxide to the atmosphere than the equivalent amount of generation at a central plant would for powering a light rail system.



P-0723-001

Based on modeling and analysis, the CRC LPA is expected to significantly increase transit ridership and reduce the number of vehicles crossing the river. This shift toward transit, reduction in auto crossings, reduced congestion, removal of bridge lifts, and lower accident rates are all factors that contribute to lower CO2 emissions with the project than without it. These factors will also make it easier for the region to meet goals for reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions.

While there was no standard threshold or standardized methodology for estimating GHG emissions when the DEIS was being developed, the project team worked with federal and state agencies to develop an appropriate analysis methodology that would allow disclosure of impacts and a comparison of alternatives. Chapter 3 (Section 3.19) of the DEIS summarized the results of GHG emissions and climate change analysis conducted for the DEIS alternatives. Further detail was included in the Energy Technical Report that was released along with the DEIS. Following the public comment period on the DEIS, the Metro Council and Portland City Council requested the CRC project team secure independent review of the GHG evaluation conducted for the DEIS. The "Columbia River Crossing Greenhouse Gas Emission Analysis Expert Review Panel Report" (January 8, 2009) describes the activities and findings of the independent review panel. The panel concluded that the GHG evaluation methods and the findings in the DEIS were valid and reasonable. They also found that the findings were likely conservative, and that the LPA would likely reduce GHG emissions even more than estimated in the DEIS. The GHG and climate change analysis in Chapter 3 (Section 3.19) of the FEIS updates the analysis that was in DEIS, but the basic conclusion that the LPA would have lower emissions than No-Build Alternative remains unchanged.

The CRC project embodies nearly all of the Governor's Climate Change Integration Group's recommendations for planning transportation

- P-0723-006** | 3. I know it's not in the plan, but light rail should be extended up through the heart of Clark County via the Glenn Jackson bridge. It's already been built, can withstand the loads imposed by light rail, and would certainly be a swifter route to lay in, relieving congestion sooner than the newer bridge would.
- P-0723-007** | 4. Again, it's not in the plan, but Clark County needs to stop paving over its farmland and planting subdivisions, designed only to be accessible by car. We have to reverse this trend of large subdivisions and remake our cities to be more compact, pedestrian and bicycle friendly.
- P-0723-008** | (A draft of this letter was inadvertently sent to you earlier; please ignore it.)

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projects to reduce GHG emissions. These recommendations include highway tolling, relieving chronic highway bottlenecks, increasing transit, and increasing pedestrian and bicycle facilities. Meeting the legislative goal to reduce future statewide emissions below 1990 levels will require numerous actions in all sectors. There is no requirement or expectation in law or policy that any single action by itself should or can have the effect of reducing future emissions below existing emissions. Such broad reductions can only result from a wide variety of actions. As stated in the DEIS, the preferred alternative by itself would reduce GHG emissions compared to No-Build Alternative. This helps move GHG emissions in the right direction, and when combined with other actions, can play an integral role in helping the state meet its overall greenhouse gas reduction goals.

P-0723-002

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.

P-0723-003

Following the selection of the LPA in July of 2008, the CRC Project Sponsors Council (PSC) was developed to provide recommendations to the project on a variety of issues, including the number of add/drop lanes over the river crossing. Over the course of several months, PSC was provided with operational characteristics and potential environmental impacts of 8-, 10-, and 12-lane options. These technical evaluation criteria included, but were not limited to, traffic safety, congestion, traffic diversion onto local streets and I-205, regional vehicle miles travelled, transit ridership, regional economic impact, effects to neighborhoods, and protected species and habitats. In addition to the technical information, PSC received input from CRC advisory groups and reviewed public comment submitted to the project and obtained during two public Q&A sessions in January 2009 regarding the number of lanes decision, as well as hearings conducted by Portland City Council and by Metro Council. In August 2010, the PSC voted unanimously to recommend that the replacement bridges be constructed with 10 lanes and full shoulders. For more information regarding the number of lanes decision making process, see Chapter 2 (Section 2.7) of the FEIS.

The proposed new lanes are add/drop lanes (i.e., lanes that connect two or more interchanges), which are used to alleviate safety issues associated with the closely spaced interchanges in the project area, and accommodate the 68 to 75% of traffic that enters and/or exits I-5 within two miles of the Columbia River.

P-0723-004

As discussed in the DEIS, a replacement bridge over the Columbia River

will include dramatically improved bicycle and pedestrian facilities by providing:

- A new 16 to 20 foot multi-use pathway over the Columbia River completely separated from vehicle traffic due to the design of the Stacked Transit Highway Bridge
- Protections from traffic noise, exhaust and debris for pedestrians and bicyclists on the river crossing
- More direct connections on each side of the river, consisting of stairs, ramps, and elevators, as well as pathway extensions that connect in with existing or planned facilities and public transit
- Many new or enhanced sidewalks, bike lanes, and crosswalks near the bridge and throughout the project area

Since the publication of the DEIS in May 2008, and the selection of the LPA in July 2008, the CRC project team has continued to work with the Pedestrian and Bicycle Advisory Committee and project partners to refine route and facility design. The updated design, as described in Chapter 2 (Section 2.2) of the FEIS, is the outcome of a long collaboration process.

P-0723-005

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.

P-0723-006

The CRC Project is focused on providing a high-capacity transit option through downtown Vancouver to Clark College. RTC has completed a High-Capacity Transit System Study which recommends specific high-capacity transit improvements, including light rail, bus rapid transit and bus service improvements that will best serve Clark County residents in the mid-term (by 2030) and long-term (beyond 2030). To view their Final HCT System Study, visit RTC's website at www.rtc.wa.gov. Though these recommendations are designed to connect with CRC transit improvements, they are not part of the CRC project.

P-0723-007

Thank you for taking the time to submit your comments on the I-5 CRC DEIS. We think that the CRC project can be a healthy contribution to compact urban form in Southwest Washington. We think that the project will contribute to transit-oriented development, and may help to add housing options within the urban core, subsequently alleviating some of the pressure to increase conversion of rural areas.

P-0723-008

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