Parametrix ENGINEERING . PLANNING . ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES

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. Gregiore 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

Meeting Minutes (continued)

P-0777-001 **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 P-0777-002 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 P-0777-003 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 P-0777-004 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 P-0777-005 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. P-0777-006 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.

Fred 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 mislead 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 mislead about tolling of existing facilities. Your staff changed there 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

P-0777-001

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. A supplemental draft is required if changes to alternatives after the draft are substantial and/ or if there are new significant impacts not previously discussed in the draft and/or there are changes in laws or regulations after the draft. The DEIS identified potential mitigation measures for all potentially significant as well as many non-significant impacts, and the FEIS further analyzes and develops mitigation measures and plans to a higher level of detail and refinement. CEQ NEPA regulations (40 CFR 1502.9(c)) do not require agencies to prepare a supplemental draft EIS just because an FEIS includes refined alternatives and additional information. Such changes are typical and expected in the planning process, and are consistent with CEQ and FHWA NEPA regulations. Between publication of the DEIS and FEIS, FTA and FHWA prepared three NEPA re-evaluations and a documented categorical exclusion (DCE) to complete changes in the project since the DEIS. The NEPA re-evaluations addressed the change in the project from: 1) the 17th Street transit alignment, 2) the composite deck truss bridge type, and 3) all other changes in design between the DEIS and the FEIS. The DCE addressed the impacts from the track work on the steel bridge.

Both agencies concluded from these evaluations that these changes and new information would not result in any significant environmental impacts that were not previously considered in the DEIS. For more information, see Appendix O of the FEIS.

P-0777-002

Oregon Highway Plan's Policy 1G states "it is the policy of the State of Oregon to maintain highway performance and improve safety by improving system efficiency and management before adding capacity".

This region has invested heavily in transportation system management (TSM) and transportation demand management (TDM) measures to improve the efficiency of the region's highways and lower vehicular demand in order to reduce the need for significant capital investments. Though many TSM and TDM measures are already in place in the I-5 corridor, the project team evaluated options to increase these low-cost measures. Screening evaluations during the development of a reasonable range of alternatives found that alternatives with only aggressive TSM/TDM measures did not meet the project's needs for addressing substandard highway design features and did not sufficiently alleviate automotive demand to reduce congestion around the I-5 crossing. These screening evaluations revealed that alternatives that best met the project's purpose and need included a mix of infrastructure investments to offer high-capacity transit and to address deficient highway design and capacity over the river and at nearby interchanges.

P-0777-003

Traffic forecasts reported in the DEIS and used to inform decisions on a locally preferred alternative (LPA) were derived from adopted regional employment and population forecasts and state-of-the-art modeling and evaluation conducted by Metro, RTC and the project team, and reviewed by all project sponsor agencies as well as FTA and FHWA. In addition, an independent panel of traffic modeling experts was convened in October 2008 to review the modeling methods and findings. These experts concluded that the project's approach to estimating future travel demand was reasonable and that it relied on accepted practices employed in metropolitan regions throughout the country. These findings are summarized in the "Columbia River Crossing Travel Demand Model Review Report" (November 25, 2008), available from the CRC project office on request. This independent review confirmed the approach CRC modeling used to address multiple variables that can affect travel demand, including gasoline prices, tolling, travel demand measures and induced development.

In regards to CO2, the DEIS included an evaluation of how the alternatives would affect greenhouse gas emissions (Chapter 3 [Section 3.19]). This evaluation found that a replacement crossing, LRT, and a toll on I-5 would reduce GHG emissions from vehicles crossing the I-5 bridges.

P-0777-004

The CRC project has produced lengthy technical reports addressing induced trips, land use impacts, economic impacts, neighborhood impacts, etc. These reports address growth management issues including the potential for induced "sprawl." Simply because a local reporter asserts that the project has ignored an issue, does not make it so. In fact, we had dozens of pages specific to this topic already available on the Web page prior to the assertion being made.

The project has not ignored the potential for induced growth. Rather, the project specifically allocated resources to study this potential. On the surface, it is easy to assert that the added lanes will, as they have in other projects nationally, induce growth. However, we studied this topic from numerous directions and have concluded that this is not just like other capacity improving projects. The location of the project, the reliance on add-drop lanes for capacity, light rail, the tolls and congestion pricing all contribute to the determination that induced sprawl is not a significant impact resulting from the CRC.

P-0777-005

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-0777-006

As described in Chapter 3 (Section 3.1) of the DEIS, ODOT's Safety Priority Index System (SPIS) ranked two locations within the CRC project area, the Hayden Island Interchange and the North Portland Harbor Bridge, within the top 5% of the highest scored sites or, high crash locations, in the state for 2004 to 2006. Within Washington, five locations along I-5 in the project area have been categorized by WSDOT as high accident locations, as reported in the DEIS.

Improving safety and mobility of cars and freight using the bridge and highway is a part of the CRC project’s purpose and need. As described in Chapter 3 (Section 3.1) of the DEIS and FEIS, the replacement bridge and highway alignment, which was chosen as part of the LPA, includes a range of safety and design improvements. Some of those improvements include:

- A new bridge structure high enough for marine traffic, which eliminates the need for a lift span
- The addition of safety shoulders for stalled vehicles and incident responders
- Improved sight lines so drivers can see over the crest of the bridge, reducing the potential for rear-end collisions during congested periods
- Longer on-ramps and off-ramps to make it easier for drivers to merge onto traffic, and improve connections between interchanges
- Reducing congestion over the bridge compared to No-Build, by improving traffic operations, providing light rail and charging a toll to cross the river.

Additional potential safety measures, such as eliminating interchanges or reducing posted speeds, were considered during earlier phases of the CRC project but were dropped from further consideration because they did not meet the accessibility goals of the project, did not meet highway design standards, and/or were not supported by the local jurisdictions.