



From: [Margaret Wade](#)
To: [Columbia River Crossing](#)
CC:
Subject: Comment on proposed Columbia River Crossing options
Date: Wednesday, June 11, 2008 4:50:19 PM
Attachments:

P-1033-001

Since April 2006, I have commuted every weekday during rush hour from my home in Southeast Portland to my current workplace in downtown Vancouver by a combination of Tri-Met route 14 and the C-TRAN 105 Express. I consider myself to be a citizen of both Vancouver and Portland because I spend significant time in both communities and because of the nature of my work, which includes community relations and working with nonprofit partners on both sides of the river.

I would like to comment primarily on the public transportation issues involved in the Columbia River Crossing project. I believe that better public/ alternative transportation options—combined with an aggressive, creative regional campaign to inform the public about these options and increase ridership—are a necessary part of any solution to I-5 traffic issues.

Among Oregon stakeholders the preferred public transportation option appears to focus primarily on extension of light rail to SW Washington, whether via a modified existing bridge, a supplemental bridge or a replacement. In general I believe MAX is an excellent public transport system. However, but it does not serve the needs of all public transportation users in the region and I have significant doubts about whether light rail is a panacea or indeed the best public transport option between Portland and Clark County. I STRONGLY URGE decision-makers not to make light rail the sole or predominant public transportation option for the Columbia River Crossing Project for the following reasons:

1) Commute time: because of the route of the MAX Yellow Line and its relatively slow speed and frequent stops, the proposed extension of light rail between Expo Center and Vancouver would potentially create a longer commute time for commuters between downtown Portland and Vancouver than the existing C-TRAN express bus system. I think that many riders who currently choose to use the express buses would continue to prefer paying higher fares for some form of reliable, fast direct bus transportation rather than commute by MAX.

My personal perspective: Based on current C-TRAN and Tri-Met schedules and the information available in the Columbia River Crossing Draft EIS, I estimate that my commute between downtown Portland and downtown Vancouver in the morning would increase to 33-34 minutes via MAX from 15 minutes via the 105 Express:

Walk between Tri-Met bus stop and MAX station:	2 minutes
Yellow Line MAX to Expo Center station (current schedule):	26 minutes
Light rail from Expo Center to Broadway & Evergreen (approx):	5-6 minutes
Total one-way commute time:	33-34 minutes

When this time is added to the approximately 25 minutes of travel and wait time from my home to a transfer point to the Yellow Line (via either bus to Hollywood MAX or bus to downtown Portland), it would take me a full hour to travel 11 miles in the morning, instead of the current 35-40 minutes..

Based on current schedules my total commute time in the evening would only be slightly longer by light rail than by the current express bus route. However, given my tight schedule—particularly in the morning—demanding professional job, and busy lifestyle, adding 20-25 minutes to my morning commute would be enough to discourage me from taking public transportation.

2) Safety/ quality of ride experience concerns on light rail: until current perceived and real problems with safety and the quality of rider experience on existing MAX routes are dealt with successfully, in my opinion many drivers, particularly those in Clark County who are not familiar with the system, may be reluctant to switch to commuting by MAX. In particular, Tri-Met needs to address the systemic problem of non-paying riders and lack of security on the trains.

My personal perspective: I experimented with commuting between downtown Portland and Delta Park via the MAX Yellow Line, then transferring to either the C-TRAN #4 or #44, on a daily basis for about 3 months between November 2007 and February 2008. I had the following experiences on the light rail portion of my trip between the

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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.

The proposed C-TRAN bus route changes with the LPA are found in Chapter 2 (Section 2.2.3) of the FEIS. It does include truncating Route 105 in downtown Vancouver (and not continuing it across the river) and eliminating Route 105S. However, other express routes would remain.

Transit trip times would improve the most for those who are traveling into Portland in the am peak and out of Portland in the pm peak.

Travel times vary by time of day, direction of travel and travel mode. Travel times improve for transit in the LPA compared to the 2030 No-Build Alternative. More specifically, the LPA:

- Improves transit travel times region-wide,
- Improves transit travel times relative to automobile travel times, and
- Improves reliability of transit travel times.

The in-vehicle and total transit travel times for all of the origin and destination pairs that were studied would improve with the LPA, compared to the 2030 No-Build Alternative, with savings ranging from 3 to 24 minutes in the southbound direction during the morning peak period. For example, with the LPA a transit trip between Downtown Vancouver and Hayden Island would save a total of 3 minutes, while a

P-1033-001 hours of 5:30-6:30 p.m. (rush hour) during that three-month period:

- 1) On one occasion I was touched inappropriately/ groped by a person who put his fingers in the gap between the bottom and back of the seat in the upper part of a MAX car in which I was sitting
- 2) On two other occasions men tried to start unsolicited, unwanted conversations by sharing inappropriate personal information and asking me intrusive personal questions
- 3) I witnessed an incident of unprovoked, prolonged verbal aggression toward other passengers, including several teenagers, by an extremely intoxicated woman that lasted approximately 10-15 minutes
- 4) I never saw fare inspectors or security personnel on any of the Yellow Line MAX trains during rush hour during that 3 month period

I did not feel that my safety was actually threatened while riding MAX and would not describe myself as overly concerned about my personal safety in general. However, when combined with increased average commute time these experiences were frequent enough and unpleasant enough that I decided that MAX was not a good alternative to the C-TRAN 105 Express.

If the adopted Columbia River Crossing plan results in significant reduction or elimination of C-TRAN express routes or other forms of direct bus service, I most likely would drive or find another job instead of commuting between Portland and Vancouver via MAX.

P-1033-002 I would also like to comment that overall, I am discouraged that the project scope and public discussion has been limited to the I-5 bridge/ Columbia River Crossing. In my experience of riding C-TRAN daily between downtown Portland and downtown Vancouver, the existing I-5 bridge is the least significant of the I-5 traffic bottlenecks on most days. Far worse in terms of daily congestion is the section of I-5 further south from the I-405 interchange to the I-84 interchange. Although my personal experience is as a "reverse commuter," my observation is that these bottlenecks appear to be equally severe for the larger number of commuters who travel south to Portland in the morning and north to Southwest Washington in the evening.

Unless I-5 issues further south—which appear to pose some difficult engineering challenges because of the current placement of interchanges/ overpasses as well as lack of land for amelioration or expansion of the existing roadway—are addressed, I do not think an upgrade of the bridge, no matter what form it takes, is going to reduce traffic problems along the I-5 corridor in any significant way. I do support tolls on the I-5 bridge and the Glenn Jackson bridge. Tolls, along with

P-1033-003 increased gas prices, seem to be one of the few viable tools for changing driver behavior and limiting the growth of number of vehicles on the road overall.

P-1033-004 I believe that what is truly needed is not a Columbia River Crossing Project but a holistic approach to traffic problems along the I-5 corridor that adequately addresses future population growth, the impact of peak oil, environmental concerns, and the cultural shift necessary to get more people to use public transportation. I think that for the future, both Southwest Washington and Oregon would be best served by a faster, more convenient and better-integrated public transportation system that serves the different needs of people throughout the region with a variety of options that provide easier access to transportation hubs and corridors for pedestrians and cyclists. In my opinion the public conversation thus far seems to me to be too narrowly focused on "either-or" choices and an overly limited vision, and is too limited in terms of geographic scope to address the greater complexity of public transportation challenges for commuters along the I-5 corridor.

P-1033-005 One last comment: it's great that this project has solicited public comment through a variety of forums, but I wonder whether the comments you are receiving adequately reflect the views and experiences of those most affected by the proposed public transportation options? As far as I know, neither Tri-Met nor C-TRAN riders on the relevant bus and MAX routes between Portland and Vancouver appear to have been systematically surveyed for their opinions. It seems to me that such a survey would be relatively easy to do. The cost would be negligible compared with the cost of an actual bridge upgrade or replacement, and the compiled information invaluable in gaining a more comprehensive view of the concerns of the core group of existing public transportation riders.

Sincerely,
Margaret Wade

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trip between Clark College and Pioneer Square would save 24 minutes. During the afternoon/evening peak period in the northbound direction, travel time savings would range from 5 to 28 minutes. For example, a transit trip between Hayden Island and Vancouver would save an estimated 5 minutes, while a trip between Pioneer Square and Clark College would save 28 minutes (dropping from 72 minutes with the No Build Alternative to 44 minutes with the LPA). Transit reliability between major origins and destinations is higher due to the availability of light rail that travels in an exclusive guideway.

For more information, please see FEIS Chapter 3 (Section 3.1).

Safety and security are top priorities for C-Tran and TriMet. CRC, C-TRAN and TriMet are partnering with local jurisdictions, police and neighborhoods to design, implement and operate a safe and secure transit system. A Safety and Security Management Plan (SSMP) was created, in part, to address public concerns about safety, and is a requirement for funding from the Federal Transit Administration. Safety will be designed into every phase of the project. Nationally, studies show that crime rates at the stations directly correlated to the amount of crime in the surrounding neighborhoods.

In the past year TriMet has aggressively enhanced safety and security on its MAX and bus systems. Over the past year, the number of police officers working in the Transit Police Division doubled to 58 officers who spend up to 70 percent of their time patrolling the system. Additionally, TriMet added 15 new fare inspectors and granted authority for all 46 TriMet Road Supervisors to enforce fares.

Please see Chapter 3 (Section 3.1) of the FEIS for more information regarding potential impact on crime and plans for ensuring the safety and security of passengers using the light rail system.

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The Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) completed Phase I construction of the I-5 Delta Park widening project in fall 2010. Phase I of the project involved widening I-5 and lengthening the entrance and exit ramps at Victory Boulevard and Columbia Boulevard. Phase II involves improving local streets and will begin when funding is secured. Phase I of the Delta Park project widened the current 2-lane segment of southbound I-5 to 3 lanes. There are currently no immediate plans to widen I-5 south of Delta Park. Neither the CRC project nor the Delta Park projects are intended to address the southbound traffic congestion that currently exists near the I-5/I-405 split. However, traffic analyses show the congestion at the split will not be worsened because of the Columbia River Crossing project. The main reason is that fewer cars are expected to cross the river with a project in 2030 than without a project. This is due to the provision of improved transit service and tolling.

Beyond the CRC and Delta Park projects, the I-5 Transportation and Trade Partnership Final Strategic Plan recommended a comprehensive list of modal actions relating to: additional transit capacity and service; additional rail capacity; land use and land use accord; transportation demand/system management; environmental justice; additional elements and strategies (such as new river crossings); and financing. RTC and Metro are tasked with initiating recommendations as part of their regional transportation planning role. Examples of current efforts include RTC's evaluation of future high-capacity transit in Clark County, and evaluation of needs for future river crossings. Regional planners have investigated solutions to existing bottlenecks at the I-5 connections with I-405 and I-84. ODOT is responsible for conducting ongoing studies to identify other congestion problems on I-5 in Oregon that may need to be addressed in the future.

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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.

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The Purpose and Need is based on extensive analysis of the existing and projected transportation problems in the I-5 CRC corridor, and reflects extensive feedback from the public and stakeholder groups. This includes analysis and input during the CRC study as well as the I-5 Transportation and Trade Partnership Study and Strategic Plan that preceded CRC. The Purpose and Need focuses largely on metrics that do not inherently require substantial, or exclusive, increases in highway capacity. The purpose statement is intentionally worded so as to allow consideration of a wide range of solutions including demand management, transit, highway, tolling, and other options for addressing the stated needs. Following the development of the Purpose and Need statement, analysis of a wide range of alternatives, and input from the public, agencies and stakeholders on those alternatives and analysis, it became clear that that the Purpose and Need could not be met by any single type of improvement. It is best met by a multimodal alternative that improves highway, transit, and bicycle and pedestrian facilities in the I-5 corridor, and adds tolling to the highway river crossing.

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The SW Washington Regional Transportation Council conducted a survey in fall 2007 on high capacity transit system development. The results of that survey were made available to CRC transit planners and engineers. In addition, C-Tran conducted an on-board survey in 2006 about rider preferences. These survey results were considered by CRC staff. CRC staff has targeted transit riders when notifying the public about upcoming public meetings and the project in general. Prior to the

publication of the Draft EIS, notices about the project were placed in print and electronic newsletters published by the two transit agencies, fliers were distributed at C-TRAN transit stations and advertisements were placed on-board buses and all trains in the TriMet system. Since publication of the Draft EIS, two working groups were formed specifically to advise the project on transit-related issues: the Vancouver Working Group and the Portland Working Group. Transit riders are represented on the groups.