

**Hines, Maurice**

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**From:** Tiffany Couch [TCouch@acuityforensics.com]  
**Sent:** Monday, October 24, 2011 10:15 PM  
**To:** Columbia River Crossing  
**Subject:** FEIS Comments

**P-048-001** We have an opportunity at this point in time to call a time out to the CRC project and to put this project back on track. Traffic impediments in our area affect commerce and mobility.

The CRC Project Office purports that their current project will:

- Alleviate Congestion
- Improve Freight Mobility
- Improve Public Transportation (reliability, connectivity)
- Provide a Safer Crossing
- Improve bicycle and pedestrian access
- Improve seismic vulnerability

When you read the words on the immaculate reports that this office has created, they all *sound just right*. They *sound* exactly like the solutions most of us are looking for.

However, when one just simply scratches the surface, it becomes apparent that the words are just that....words. The work that has been performed by numerous experts (many of whom remain unpaid); has uncovered astounding anomalies in the work performed by the CRC Project Office. In fact, the body of work presented by outside experts causes one to realize that the “purpose and need” of this CRC project isn’t being addressed at all.

From the start, there have been serious breakdowns in process:

**P-048-002**

- When an agency is charged with spending precious taxpayer dollars, mustn’t that agency also have proper financial reporting? The CRC has no basic financial statements. In fact, reporting from their accounting system has uncovered problems reconciling total project expenditures.

**P-048-003**

- When an agency realizes a project must be completed using outside contractors, mustn’t there be proper bidding, contracting, and payment processes and procedures? The CRC does not appear to have followed basic contracting principles. Why did only a single bidder submit qualifications? Why does it happen to be the same vendor who has been awarded all major

**P-048-001**

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 that 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.

**P-048-002**

The project takes these charges very seriously. Recently the project has introduced new accounting measures and provides monthly updates on the project website. If there are specific financial data that you would like to review, please contact the project office.

**P-048-003**

Numerous other contractors work with both the Oregon and Washington DOTs. And, as the project prepares for the start of construction, new contractors will be selected, and the values of those contracts will, in fact, be larger than the contract for the alternatives analysis and environmental process. Much like with residential contracting (such as plumbers), the team that begins the work is often best able to complete the work and is most familiar with the data, related analyses, and negotiations among local agencies.

**P-048-003** | contracts in recent Oregon and Washington history? Why does it happen to be the same vendor who also did all of the previous "I-5" studies for WSDOT?

**P-048-004** |

- When an agency pays bills, shouldn't all expenditures be tracked in the appropriate fund? **The CRC has not tracked all expenditures of this project in a separate fund.** So far, we have traced over \$18M (of \$125M) in unknown expenditures. The CRC project office has provided us a white paper explaining to a Certified Public Accountant what a "journal entry" is; but has not provided any reporting to explain the purpose of the journal entries that effectively transferred expenditures from one fund into the "CRC Fund".

**P-048-005** | The accounting anomalies we continue to uncover are truly astounding. But what is most astounding is the body of evidence produced by other experts who have pointed out **significant** issues with this project. When this many significant issues arise, governing bodies must call a time out, call attention to the issues, and work to solve them.

Other experts have pointed out the following:

- **The Rose Quarter Bottleneck**
  - The bottleneck at the Rose Quarter is currently (and will continue to be) a significant bottleneck on the I-5 Corridor. An independent study commissioned by the City of Portland ([http://portlandtransport.com/documents/URS\\_CRC\\_Report\\_July\\_7\\_2010.pdf](http://portlandtransport.com/documents/URS_CRC_Report_July_7_2010.pdf)) as recently as 2010 indicates that southbound commuters will save **1 minute** on their southbound commute. The primary cause of this is related to the bottleneck at the Rose Quarter...where traffic narrows to two through lanes and one dedicated exit lane.
- We've heard Ms. Boyd indicate that the CRC Project can't "fix everything" at once; however, there are NO PLANS to fix the Rose Quarter Bottleneck.

**P-048-006** |

- **Bridge Design Issues**
  - The Independent Review Panel indicated that the bridge that had been planned for could not be built. <http://www.columbian.com/news/2011/feb/03/engineers-report-endorses-crossing-project/>

**P-048-007** |

- Mr. Kevin Peterson, an expert on numerous international projects, has put forth a bridge design that could be built more safely and more cost-effective than the current project. Yet, the Project Office did not fully study this design (as required by NEPA).

#### **P-048-004**

The Columbia River Crossing project is a joint project of the Oregon and Washington state departments of transportation. ODOT and WSDOT provide financial accounting services and oversight for the project in compliance with applicable state and federal laws, regulations and policies. Expenditures on the CRC project by ODOT and/or WSDOT are tracked within department accounting systems using unique identifiers which allow for project specific reporting.

In response to public records requests, the project has worked with ODOT and WSDOT accounting and other offices to gather and provide complete project expenditures lists, contracts and invoices as specifically requested, as well as respond to questions about the data and information provided. There are no unknown expenditures. Journal vouchers are used to conduct accounting transactions between subsystems which interface with WSDOT's accounting system. Expense detail for any specific journal voucher is available and retained according to approved retention schedules by WSDOT. The project office uses software to manage the project day-to-day. This software is used to track project finances for project management purposes. Information in this software is reconciled with the accounting records of each state monthly.

#### **P-048-005**

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

**P-048-007** | (Please contact me for white paper(s) submitted by Mr. Peterson over the last 18 months).

- **Financing Issues**

**P-048-008** |

- Mr. Joe Cortright, an economist in Portland conducted an extensive study. His findings indicate that the Project Office has used significantly flawed assumptions AND out of date traffic studies, creating a potential \$500M revenue shortfall.
- Oregon State Treasurer's office commissioned a study by two separate experts who concurred.

- **Total Cost**

**P-048-009** |

- Mr. Cortright points out that financing costs (interest, finance charges, etc.) have not been included in reports to the product. The costs could exceed \$2B.
- Operation and Maintenance Costs for the bridge, rail lines, and tolling facilities are NOT included in the price of the bridge.
- Total costs of the bridge, financing costs, and O&M costs, are estimated to exceed **\$10B**.
- Please contact me for Mr. Cortright's Study

- **Transit Issues**

**P-048-010** |

- Light Rail Times from downtown Vancouver to downtown Portland will exceed CURRENT express bus lines and will exceed current single occupancy vehicle times. (By 15 to 20 minutes *per trip*).
- Light Rail has been voted down
- The Light Rail portion of this project is estimated to cost in excess of \$1 Billion
- Light Rail is highly subsidized and expensive
- Buses, BRT, and other options are less expensive!
- Please contact me for studies related to transit issues

- **Bidding and Contract Issues**

**P-048-011** |

- Only a single vendor (David Evans) submitted a bid for this project
- The Call for Consultants indicate the EIS project will "exceed \$20M"
  - Funding available was just \$6 M
- Contract for \$50M is executed less than 90 days after call for consultants
  - Current Contract is slated at **\$105M**.

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.

### **P-048-006**

The Bridge Expert Review Panel considered the suggestions from the Independent Review Panel, and recommended three bridge types to the project. The Selected Alternative includes one of those types, as discussed in Chapter 2 of the FEIS.

### **P-048-007**

Mr. Peterson's proposal was considered. Please see the responses to his comments (P-029 and P-030).

### **P-048-008**

The CRC project is subject to the same review and audit procedures as

P-048-012

- **Lack of Financial Statements and Accountability**
  - No financial statements for this project have been created
  - Data provided purporting to show 100% of all CRC expenditures does not reconcile to "Prolog" reports provided by the CRC project office.
  - Project office has refused and/or has been remiss in providing *basic* accounting data (contracts, invoices supporting payment, etc.)

P-048-013

- **Unclear Funding Sources**
  - The funds being used to pay for this single project could be better spent by "spreading the wealth" to various parts of the state where critical needs can be met
  - There is much uncertainty in the federal budget; will we even have funding for this project.
  - There is NO INFORMATION Provided as to who is going to bear the cost of any costs in excess of \$3.2B

P-048-014

At what point are the local leaders and decision makers going to say "Enough is Enough". I urge you to sit down with experts who are providing you with the warnings related to inefficiencies, and the anomalies associated with this project. I urge you to take a look at your funding. Is it prudent to spend all of our money in a single place, or might there be prudent alternatives to the current congestion situation here; yet enough dollars to spread to fix aging and failing areas along other trade routes in the States of Washington and Oregon?

Thank you for your consideration.

Best regards,  
Tiffany

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other projects under the authority of the lead agencies. Additionally, Governors Kitzhaber and Gregoire, and Oregon and Washington legislators, have made it clear that they will review every element of this project and provide oversight and accountability. The governors and legislative leaders are discussing the scope of interim legislative oversight committees. At Governor Kitzhaber's request, the Oregon State Treasurer conducted an independent review of the CRC's financing plan and released a report in July 2011. CRC incorporated the treasurer's recommendation in Chapter 4 of the Final EIS.

The traffic projections which have been called into question are the same traffic projections which are used for all growth management and infrastructure sizing efforts in the Metro area. In fact, the project is required to base its traffic projections on these local plans and studies. The potential for a slower-than-projected rise in trips has been considered. Even if the projections are high, the facility is intended to serve mobility needs for 100 years. Therefore, even if it takes an additional five or ten years to reach the projected levels, the facility has still been appropriately sized.

#### **P-048-009**

The FEIS Finance Chapter (Chapter 4) provides a table (Exhibit 4.4-3, page 4-18) with revenue sources and amounts to cover costs expected for four scenarios (LPA med; LPA high; LPA with highway phasing med; LPA with highway phasing high). These scenarios range in total revenue needed from \$3.2 - \$3.8 billion.

Mr. Cortright has included costs in his estimates which are not appropriate. The capital (construction) costs for a project should not include maintenance and operations costs, though these too are discussed in the Finance Chapter. Mr. Cortright's estimates include costs to rebuild the Rose Quarter area of I-5, which is not part of the CRC project.

*"Whenever you see a successful business, someone once made a courageous decision." - Peter Drucker*

**P-048-010**

The FEIS compares light rail transit travel time in year 2030 to bus rapid transit travel times in year 2030 and finds that light rail will offer a quicker trip than bus rapid transit. It is not applicable to compare future travel times (light rail) to existing conditions (express buses). Congestion on I-5 will increase as more vehicles travel on the highway, therefore increasing the travel times of express buses, which use standard traffic lanes.

Light rail has been endorsed by every local Sponsoring Agency (Vancouver City Council, C-TRAN, RTC, Portland City Council, TriMet, and Metro), whose boards include elected leadership from throughout the area.

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 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.

As described in Chapter 3 (Section 3.1) of the DEIS, the operations and

maintenance (O&M) costs associated with light rail (LRT) would be less than those associated with bus rapid transit (BRT), largely because LRT operates on electricity while BRT is dependent on the volatile fuel market. LRT costs approximately \$3.50, or 31%, less than BRT, per incremental rider when comparing both capital and operating costs.

Long-term operation and maintenance of the new light rail line will be funded through C-TRAN and TriMet. For its share of the operations and maintenance funding, C-TRAN plans on having a public vote.

**P-048-011**

Past financial performance is an important issue but is not relevant to the NEPA review process. The Record of Decision concludes the NEPA analysis. It indicates which alternative has been selected by the federal government, and allows for the continued design, eligibility for federal funding and permitting, and eventual construction of that alternative. The Locally Preferred Alternative is supported by local, regional, state, and federal agencies and has been selected following an exhaustive analysis and public involvement program.

The project takes the issues of financial management very seriously. Project staff have provided you with considerable records and reports and has responded to your inquiries. The project is currently developing new financial reporting mechanisms and has started providing monthly reports on the internet. The project will continue to work with the public to improve transparency and an understanding of the resources required for an undertaking of this scale.

The contracting process and any increases in contracting limits includes oversight by the project directors, WSDOT headquarters and legal counsel. The procurement process that resulted in selection of a General Engineering Consultant for the CRC project was open and competitive.

Contracting limits with the selected General Engineering Consultant (GEC) have been increased over time due to a variety of factors. WSDOT's contracting limit is \$50 million to allow the agency to assess if work is being conducted well and provides the best value before increasing the contract limit. Funds cannot be committed to a contract or agreement before they have been allocated. At the beginning of the NEPA phase, when the consultant agreement was initially executed, there were many unknowns – including the number of alternatives to be studied. As a result, the entire scope of the project was unknown increasing the need for contract changes over time.

**P-048-012**

Please see the responses to your similar comments above.

**P-048-013**

As the only continuous north-south Interstate on the West Coast connecting the Canadian and Mexican borders, I-5 is vital to the local, regional, and national economy. The I-5 crossing also provides the primary transportation link between Vancouver and Portland, and the only direct connection between the downtown areas of these cities. As described in the DEIS, serious problems face this important crossing, including growing congestion, impaired freight movement, limited public transit options, high auto accident rates, substandard bicycle and pedestrian facilities, and vulnerability to failure in an earthquake. The fact that other important issues face our communities does not diminish the importance of addressing the problems plaguing the I-5 crossing.

CRC assumes funds allocated to other projects would remain dedicated to those projects, and anticipates needing to find new funds to finance the project. Funding for the project will come from a variety of sources including federal grants that would not be available to other transportation projects in the region, State of Oregon, State of Washington, and regional and local sources. In addition, it is assumed

that the replacement bridge will be tolled. Please refer to Chapter 4 of the FEIS for a description of the current plans for funding construction and operation of the LPA.

**P-048-014**

There has been considerable input from independent experts and the project has made changes based on that input, as discussed in Chapter 2 of the FEIS. Please see the responses to your comments above.