

Hines, Maurice

From: Sharonnasset [sharonnasset@aol.com]
Sent: Monday, October 24, 2011 10:31 PM
To: Columbia River Crossing
Subject: formal Public Comments Environmental Impact Statement concerning the Columbia River Crossing project. -5
Attachments: CRC_Questions_Letter-March-2011.pdf; Budget_note_ODOT.pdf; Benton_and_Congressman(3).pdf; Note, HJM-22 benton -5.doc

P-079-001

Add this to the formal Public Comments Environmental Impact Statement concerning the Columbia River Crossing project.

March 28, 2011 JMH-22 a "ceremonial letter" in support for the CRC's Locally Preferred Alternative from the Oregon Legislators was in committee. The CRC did not receive a letter of support out of committee. Instead of a "ceremonial letter" of support a "note" of requirements for the project was attached at the Ways and Means Committee.

Twenty Members of the Oregon House of Representatives, Democratic and Republican have signed a letter to the House Committee on Transportation and Economic Development "We believe that there are important unresolved questions that demand further scrutiny" I have attached the entire letter. The Oregon House Members stated two concerns of several.

1. Attached a letter of 22 elected officials in who do not want a letter of support
2. Oregon Legislators Representatives and Senate have attached a Note to ODOT budget because of great concern with the CRC process and project.
3. The list of concerns on the ODOT budge include Alternatives, because reasonable alternatives were removed without being studied.
4. Senator Benton and twelve elected officials sent a letter to the Governors' that a range of alternative have not been studied if "port to port" connection (Third Bridge Now) is not studied. They ask for a Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement to be started immediately because a range of alternatives was not studied.

Sharon Nasset
CEO Third Bridge Now

P-079-001

Input by citizens, elected officials and other stakeholder on whether or not a Supplemental DEIS should be completed or more NEPA-related studies should be conducted is appreciated. However, it is the responsibility and authority of the federal NEPA lead agencies to determine when a Supplemental EIS or other environmental study is required. See Section 2.7.9 and Appendix O of the FEIS for a discussion of how FTA and FHWA reviewed changes and made determinations regarding supplemental documentation.

The CRC project has supporters and opponents, and has remaining issues to resolve as noted in Ms. Nasset's letter and attachments. Many of the funding questions raised in the attachments have been responded to in the project's updated finance plan (Chapter 4 in the FEIS) while other issues regarding funding remain to be resolved. The key consideration for the FEIS and ROD is that there has been adequate analysis, involvement, documentation and disclosure to allow the completion of the NEPA process. Remaining non-NEPA issues will be addressed during final design.

Please see the response to Ms. Nasset's other FEIS comment letters, including letter P-077, which explains why additional study is not required on the port to port alternative or other similar alternatives.

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Washington State Senate

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Senator Don Benton
17th Legislative District

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February 11, 2009

**Dear Governors' Christine Gregoire and Ted Kulongoski, Sponsor Agencies;
Southwest Washington Regional Transportation Council and CTRAN,**

P-079-001

Attached please find correspondence from Congressman Earl Blumenauer to the Director of the Oregon Department of Transportation, dated January 7, 2009

We would like to thank Congressman Earl Blumenauer for his leadership on the Columbia River Crossing project's need to follow the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requirements, that all alternatives are thoroughly studied. A thorough study of all options to include data is a necessary requirement in the NEPA process. This valuable step in the NEPA process brings the best options to the forefront and creates cooperation between the sponsoring agencies, stakeholders, and taxpayers, and the ability to receive Federal funding for the project.

We are asking that the CRC project immediately commence a Supplemental EIS to fully study the "port-to-port connector" option RC-14.


The foci of the Columbia River Crossing are the economy, safety, and the environment. A thorough NEPA process will create comparable data that will answer questions of cost, land use, environmental justice, mobility, congestion relief, regional freight, the distribution of benefits, and impacts.

In summary, adherence to the National Environmental Policy Act is essential for promoting consensus among various stakeholders and for demonstrating transparency. The I-5 international highway system's importance is internationally known. An open and transparent process is needed to build stakeholders consensus that will propel and help develop this project to completion. A project as important and enormous as the Columbia River Crossing must have transparency and must provide credible comparable data on the "port to port connector."

We the undersigned, as elected officials, and with our constituents' best interests at the forefront of our actions, urge Southwest Regional Transportation Council, CTRAN and the Governors of Oregon and Washington, to direct CRC Project to proceed with a full Supplemental EIS on the "port to port connector" RC-14, starting in March 2009.


Thank you for your immediate attention to this very urgent matter.


Respectfully submitted,



Senator Don Benton,
17th District
Member of the
Senator's Joint CRC Oversight Committee


Senator Pam Roach
WA State Senator 31st District

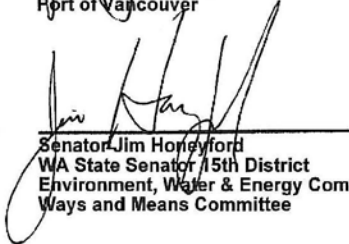

Councilor Pat Campbell
Vancouver City Councilmen #6

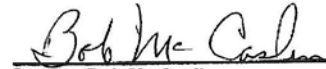

Senator Bob Morton
WA State Senator 7th District
Environment, Water & Energy Committee


Commissioner Marc Bolt
Clark County Commissioner
SW WA Regional Transportation Council


Commissioner Jerry Oliver
Port of Vancouver

Commissioner Tom Mielke
Clark County Commissioner
SW WA Regional Transportation Council
CTRAN Board Member


Senator Jim Honeyford
WA State Senator 15th District
Environment, Water & Energy Committee
Ways and Means Committee


Senator Bob Mc Caslin
WA State Senator 4th District
Economic Development Trade and Innovation

P-079-001

In support of Senator Benton's letter to Governors Christine Gregoire and Ted Kulongoski, Sponsor Agencies; Southwest Washington Regional Transportation Council and CTRAN.



Representative Bruce Chandler
WA State Representative 15th District
Commerce and Labor Committee
Ways and Means Committee

Senator Larry George
OR State Senator 13th District
Senator's Joint CRC Oversight Committee

EARL BLUMENAUER
Third District, Oregon
COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS
SUBCOMMITTEES:
TRADE
SELECT REVENUE MEASURES
COMMITTEE ON BUDGET



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Portland, OR 97232
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January 7, 2009

Matthew Garrett, Director
Oregon Department of Transportation
355 Capitol Street NE Rm 135
Salem, OR 97301

Dear Director Garrett:

P-079-001

Attached please find correspondence from my constituent, Ms. Sharon Nassel regarding the process for the proposed Columbia River Crossing project. Ms. Nassel is concerned that one option—known as the “port-to-port connector”—was removed from consideration without being subject to a complete NEPA analysis, and leaves the project vulnerable to legal challenges that may result in crippling delays.

Ms. Nassel believes that the CRC project should immediately commence with a supplemental EIS to fully study the “port-to-port connector” option.

As ODOT is one of the agencies leading the efforts on this project, I’m sharing her concerns with you. I would appreciate a response from ODOT or the CRC project addressing how the “port-to-port connector” option was removed from consideration as it relates to the NEPA process.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Earl Blumenauer
Member of Congress

Cc: Sharon Nassel

PRINTED ON RECYCLED PAPER.

P-079-001

Dear Congressman Earl Blumenauer,

Thank you for this opportunity to bring our concerns to you. It also has been recommended by locally elected officials that federal elected officials take the lead on this because NEPA is a requirement for federal funding and the NEPA process has not been followed. The National Environmental Policy Act was established to guarantee everyone would have a valued part in construction projects within our United States. It is our understanding that all parties should have an equal part in the decision making of a project. We also understand that all data and information used in the decision making process is to be publicly transparent and available. The NEPA process was established to avoid problems with the few with power subjecting their will over the citizens. The hard work that made justice part of the public works project process will only be followed when our elected officials insist the NEPA process be followed. Therefore, I come before you today asking you to use the power the citizens have given you to work on their behalf to impose justice and insure we, are a land ruled by law.

We see two possible outcomes the way this project is being managed:

1. Connect with CRC and have them follow the NEPA laws or
2. Wait until the Environmental Impact Statement is complete and then deal with Law suits.

If we wait we could face the issues that the "Bridge to Nowhere" faced. Our credibility at the Federal level will be lost and we will have to start over.

We are providing a list of those on record who have stated that the Replacement Bridge is the wrong project, the NEPA process has not been followed, Open Meetings Laws have been violated and the process needs to be opened to options that were arbitrarily remove by CRC:
Clark County Commissioners, Bike Transportation Alliance, Coalition for a Livable Future, Oregonians In Action, 1000 Friends of Oregon, Cascade Policy Institute, Evergreen Freedom Foundation, Board of Sustainable Future, Osprey, Audubon Society, EPA, Lars Larson, Onward Oregon, Sensible Transportation Solutions, Economic Transportation Alliance, Local Economists, Environmentalist, Metro Councilors, Port Vancouver Commissioner Jerry Oliver, Senator Benton, Representative Jim Dunn, Representative Chip Shields, Senator Larry George, Senator Gary George, Pearson Airport board members, US Fish & Wildlife hatchery division, Clark College Law Department, Professor Will Macht, CRC Sponsor Agencies and 800 taxpayer signatures. This group of tax payers rarely has the opportunity to speak with one voice.

In conclusion we are asking you to require the Columbia River Crossing Project to immediately perform a Supplemental Environmental Impact Study to thoroughly study the Port-to-Port connection RC-14.

Sincerely,

Sharon Nasset

Economic Transportation Alliance

P-079-002

Please see response to comment P-079-001 above.

	General Fund	Lottery Funds	Other Funds	Federal Funds	Nonlimited Other Funds	Nonlimited Federal Funds	Total Funds	Positions	Full-Time Equivalent (FTE)
Package 502 Columbia River Crossing Investment									

P-079-002

Package Description: This package is provided for the purpose of approving a budget note relating to the Columbia River Crossing project.

LFO Recommendation: Approve the budget note.

Budget Notes: The Columbia River Crossing (CRC) bridge project is a major initiative to address congestion problems on I-5 between Portland, Oregon and Vancouver, Washington that requires support by not only the Governors of both states but the Legislatures as well. The Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) budget includes resources to continue work on solutions that advances the CRC to completion of the required Environmental Impact Statement.

ODOT is directed to provide reports to the Senate and House Transportation Committees on the progress made on the CRC project whenever these committees or their interim equivalents meet. Such ODOT reports shall include updated information on cost estimates, proposed alternatives, right-of-way procurement schedule, financing as potential impacts on other Oregon transportation funding, needs and priorities.

ODOT is directed to secure and provide an independent investment grade analysis of the project with oversight of the consultant provided by the State Treasurer.

Finally, ODOT shall provide a clear and concise feasibility study, and develop a phased master plan for the CRC that allows for legislative oversight and approval at key decision points and report to the Legislature by February 2012, with the first iteration of CRC reports.

LFO Recommendation:



**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
900 COURT ST NE
SALEM, OR 97301**

MEMORANDUM

TO: House Committee on Transportation and Economic Development

FROM: Rep. Jules Bailey Rep. Chris Garrett
Rep. Phil Barnhart Rep. Mitch Greenlick
Rep. Katie Eyre Brewer Rep. Chris Harker
Rep. Ben Cannon Rep. Mark Johnson
Rep. Brian Clem Rep. Shawn Lindsay
Rep. Jason Conger Rep. Mike McLane
Rep. Michael Dembrow Rep. Mary Nolan
Rep. Margaret Doherty Rep. Julie Parrish
Rep. Lew Frederick Rep. Patrick Sheehan
Rep. Tim Freeman Rep. Carolyn Tomei

DATE: March 28, 2011

RE: CRC Questions

P-079-002

Thank you for scheduling this important hearing on HJM 22. Having reviewed recent correspondence regarding the Columbia River Crossing¹, we believe that there are important unresolved questions that demand further scrutiny before the commitment of additional public dollars to this project.

Raising questions should not be construed as opposition to a new bridge. We are well acquainted with the congestion issues in the I-5 corridor; we recognize the need for major improvements at the Columbia River; and we fully support the effort to secure federal funds. These arguments in favor of a major project, however, are not necessarily arguments for any specific proposal. With respect to the current CRC proposal, at least the following questions deserve further attention.

1. What is the "true cost" of the CRC?

P-079-003

The cost of the CRC is represented to be between \$3.2 and \$3.6 billion. Impresa argues that the true cost, in year-of-expenditure dollars, is closer to \$10 billion over the life of the project after accounting for debt service and the need for improvements to the Rose

¹ We refer to the Oct. 4, 2010 memo from Impresa Consulting; the Jan. 21, 2011 response from ODOT; and the Feb. 7, 2011 reply from Impresa Consulting.

P-079-003

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.

P-079-003

Quarter. CRC responds that the Rose Quarter is a "different" issue. But it appears to be very much in question whether the CRC, absent Rose Quarter improvements, accomplishes much more than shifting the I-5 bottleneck to the south. If Rose Quarter improvements are an essential part of a complete solution to I-5 congestion in the Portland area, then those expenses should be considered in evaluating the true cost, and in presenting the cost to the public.

2. Traffic projections and tolling revenue

P-079-004

The CRC financing plan depends heavily on tolling revenue. The projected revenue from tolling depends, in turn, on projected traffic over the new bridge. The Impresa analysis contends that based on ODOT's own data and assumptions of 1% annual growth, traffic over the CRC will be 30,000 vehicles per day **lower** in 2030 than the DEIS forecast. If this is correct, the less-than-projected tolling revenue results (according to Impresa's analysis) in a debt service **shortfall of \$1 billion**.

In the few years since CRC's projections were issued, traffic over the bridge has not only failed to increase as forecast, it has actually declined. Based on the exchange between Impresa and ODOT, there appears to be an empirical dispute about whether the current decline in traffic levels merely reflects the recession or, instead, reflects a longer term "sea change" in how people commute. Impresa points out that the decline in traffic preceded the recession by two full years. We are not aware of a refutation of this point.

CRC/ODOT assert that their projections are based on commonly accepted models; Impresa responds that these models are themselves flawed, and cites examples. We are not aware of a refutation of this point, either.

Finally, ODOT says that there will be an independent, investment-grade study at a future time, before bonding. **If there is an undisputed need for an independent, investment-grade financial analysis**, it should be undertaken before any major commitment of additional public dollars.

3. Cost overruns

P-079-005

Critics assert that CRC's cost estimate of \$3.2-3.6 billion is low by at least hundreds of millions of dollars, given the likelihood of cost overruns in a project such as this.

Cost overruns are a fact of life and should not be taken by themselves as a reason to oppose the project. However, the magnitude of possible overruns should be considered in conjunction with the significant questions about the CRC's traffic and tolling projections. If we are materially off-target on *both* projected costs and projected revenues, this could create enormous downside exposure for Oregon taxpayers. We are not satisfied that this downside risk has been fully digested.

Thank you for your consideration of these issues.

P-079-004

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 Investment Grade Tolling Analysis will follow, and must follow, the Record of Decision.

P-079-005

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 Ms. Nasset with considerable records and reports and has responded to her 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.

P-079-006

These comments repeat the comments provided on page 1 of Ms. Nasset's submittal, responses are provided above.

Add this to the formal Public Comments Environmental Impact Statement concerning the Columbia River Crossing project.

P-079-006

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