From: Columbia River Crossing
To: Columbia River Crossing;
Subject: CRC News: Columbia River Crossing will evaluate noise reduction techniques for future I-5 bridge construction
Date: Friday, January 14, 2011 3:18:55 PM

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Jan. 14, 2011

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Columbia River Crossing will evaluate noise reduction techniques for future I-5 bridge construction

VANCOUVER – A project scheduled for February will collect data to evaluate construction noise and techniques to reduce effects to fish and wildlife during replacement of the I-5 bridge, Columbia River Crossing officials announced today.

A total of six temporary test piles will be installed in two locations in the Columbia River. A pile is a circular steel column that is driven into the river bottom to provide support for bridge structures and temporary construction work needs. Installation of piles can create noise associated with metal striking metal.

CRC is testing two installation methods and two underwater noise reduction techniques during the three-week project. Project engineers will measure noise volumes on land and underwater, assessing how the use of "bubble curtains" can protect Columbia River fish and wildlife and how quickly the piles may be installed.

"This bridge is located over a major river in an urban area. People's homes are nearby and we have endangered species swimming near the work area," said Don Wagner, Columbia River Crossing project director for Washington. "This data will give us information to minimize effects during construction in the future."

American Construction of Tacoma was awarded the contract for the work Thursday, Jan 13. The firm's bid of $811,204 was the lowest received and 8.5 percent below the estimated cost for the project.

All work will be conducted during daylight hours and is expected to be complete by Feb. 28. Monitors will be located in downtown Vancouver and Hayden Island to measure the amount of noise and vibration generated before and during the test pile effort. Underwater noise monitors also will be used.

The six test piles will be installed just west of the current I-5 bridge using either vibratory or impact methods. Piles will be assessed for structural capacity, speed of installation, effects to water clarity and noise. During pile installation, periodic testing of two types of bubble curtains will be evaluated for underwater noise mitigation effectiveness. Bubble curtains create bubbles around the pile to absorb the underwater noise which may be harmful to fish and wildlife species.

"This work will provide more certainty about Columbia River bridge building so we can plan for construction and more accurately estimate costs and minimize impacts," said Richard Brandman, CRC project director for Oregon.

Additional information about the test pile program, including a map of the research area, may be found on the CRC website at www.ColumbiaRiverCrossing.org.

About the CRC project

CRC is a long-term, comprehensive project to reduce congestion, enhance mobility and improve safety on I-5 between SR 500 in Vancouver, Wash., and Columbia Boulevard in Portland. The project will replace the I-5 bridge, extend light rail to Vancouver, improve closely-spaced interchanges and enhance the pedestrian and bicycle path between the two cities. The project will be funded by federal and state sources, as well as future tolls.

Written comments may be submitted on the CRC project at any time at feedback@columbiarivercrossing.org. More information is available on the CRC project website: www.columbiarivercrossing.org.

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