



June 19, 2008



Columbia River Crossing



Kris Stickler
Columbia River Crossing
700 Washington Street, Suite 300
Vancouver, WA 98660

Dear Mr. Stickler,

We, the undersigned, represent the leaders of the professional associations of Portland and Vancouver's design community. Our purpose in writing is to encourage you to use this opportunity to consider the enormous impacts the Columbia River Crossing will have on our region. We further ask that you elevate the conversation and scrutiny beyond the core considerations of engineering to include the human, artistic and symbolic impacts this structure will have. We are asking that the spiritual and aesthetic dimensions of this crucial connector be raised to be of equal concern to those of the functional solutions. Now, as the comment period for the Draft EIS draws to a close, is the time.

Your comments and those of the other public agencies in the region will define the key questions that the balance of the design process must answer in order to move forward. You have the opportunity to profoundly impact the quality of this crossing and the way in which future generations look back on what was done here. We stand ready to help you to define the important design, aesthetic, and cultural questions that must be asked. We understand that this project has had many contributors and extensive public process. But we are asking that as decision makers you condition your approvals with additional criteria and review processes recommended by the Urban Design Advisory Group.

If a bridge is built, it should be regionally significant and context sensitive. This bridge crosses the greatest river of the western United States. It can be seen from the moon. The Columbia is the lifeblood of our region and has demanded the greatest respect from all civilizations that have grown around it. It is a key piece of both the region's commerce and its tourism. We now have the opportunity to design a symbol of the connection of our two states, the region and our respect for the role it plays in our lives. We have arrived at the moment to transcend the engineering necessities and to create a powerful and unique linkage that inspires future generations. We are at the point in the process where the practicalities are understood. Now is the time to elevate the design to address the spirit of this connection by deepening the discussion and asking more of the project.

The CRC Urban Design Advisory Group already in place has our support. But only if it has your powerful endorsement and enthusiastic commitment can it assume the role it should play. As a collection of experienced design professionals whose long involvement here has helped to establish our reputation as one of the most livable communities in the world, we the undersigned, understand that without champions of good design no project realizes its full

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Signatories

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The CRC project design for interchanges, roadway elements, transit stations, and other facilities will be context-sensitive and reflect the unique character of the surrounding area. As you know, CRC formed a 14-member, bi-state Urban Design Advisory Group (UDAG), made up of design professionals and neighborhood representatives. The goals of the UDAG include, achieving "design excellence that can be embraced by affected communities and users" and providing "a landmark bridge that is both inspired and inspiring and fully integrates the design and function of the structure with the urban design elements." Working closely with project designers, UDAG has provided input and guidance on integrating the new facilities with the surrounding community.

The guidelines developed by UDAG have been used to guide development of the bridge design as well as the design of numerous other project components including interchange facilities, park and ride facilities, and transit stations. For the DEIS, an indepth exploration of design treatments was not possible. The designs were not sufficiently well developed. For the FEIS, as you will see, the design issues have been significantly advanced. You will also see, in the Visual and Aesthetics Technical Report, that the UDAG guidelines have been used in the assessment of the proposed design and all design options. These guidelines will also be used in the final design processes, years from now, as individual project components are being finalized and constructed.

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potential. We ask that you let us help you raise the humane criteria of this project to the forefront. That is the role of the Design Community in this and every region of the country. The history and success of design in the metropolitan region as a generator of public support, development activity and responsible, carefully planned growth is well acknowledged. Help us to bring this level of professional insight to this visible and important project.

In the region all major projects benefit from inclusive and considerate design review. Now that preliminary engineering has identified several alternatives we ask that the process be focused to allow the design, aesthetic, and cultural dimensions of the project to take on an equal role to those of the engineering criteria. Deepen the review process. Require the agencies and consultants who are leading this design effort to make design as important as efficiency, cost and engineering. This can be accomplished within the current process only if local government makes it clear that design has their support and will be a key part of the ongoing review process. We want to help the Columbia River Crossing to be a new model of cooperation and sensitivity that resonates with our culture and long established values. This is not only a simple structure to carry vehicles. This could be an expression of our highest aspirations, central to the urban center that combines two great cities.

As experienced and deeply committed citizens with design in our blood we urge you to look again at this bridge and imagine how much more it could be. We all stand together to help you reach the highest goals for the CRC.

For further information, contact Sandra Stevens, Hon. AIA, Executive Vice President of AIA Portland, (503) 223-8757, sandra@aiaportland.org.

Sincerely,



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Design Professionals Task Force,
American Institute of Architects



Michael McCulloch, AIA
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cc: Mayor Tom Potter
Mayor Elect Sam Adams
Members of the Portland City Council
Mayor Royce Pollard
Members of the Vancouver City Council
Council President David Bragdon and Fellow Metro Councilors
Fred Hansen, General Manager, Tri-Met
Tim Leavitt, C-TRAN