


**From:** [craigandcolleen@comcast.net](mailto:craigandcolleen@comcast.net)   
**To:** [Draft EIS Feedback](#);  
**CC:**  
**Subject:** DEIS Document Viewer Feedback  
**Date:** Tuesday, May 27, 2008 5:55:20 PM  
**Attachments:**

---

From: Colleen McMullen  
 Zip Code: 98683  
 Address: 2611 SE 152nd Ave  
 City: Vancouver  
 State: WA  
 E-Mail: [craigandcolleen@comcast.net](mailto:craigandcolleen@comcast.net)  
 Section: Chapter 3. EXISTING CONDITIONS AND ENVIRONMENTAL  
 CONSEQUENCES  
 Page: 3-1

**Comment or Question:**

**P-0483-001** I have grave concerns that the Draft EIS does not take into proper account the cumulative effect that bridge tolls at the rates proposed would have on neighborhoods and businesses in Vancouver as a whole, in addition to the disproportionate impact it could have on low-income populations (as is briefly addressed in Section 3.5 the Draft EIS). In short, I am concerned that a bridge toll program with tolls as high as are being proposed would have the long-term effects of (1) causing a migration of higher income residents and "brain drain" out of Vancouver, (2) causing businesses to flee Vancouver (or not to locate in Vancouver in the first place), and (3) lowering property values in Vancouver. These impacts of the current tolling proposal could result in effectively transforming Vancouver into a slum suburb of Portland.

My husband and I are both lawyers and Vancouver residents. (I am currently inactive). When we each settled in Vancouver, we commuted from Vancouver to Portland each day. Eventually, we both found work in Vancouver and no longer commute daily. Even as relatively high-income residents, we would not have elected to live in Vancouver if we were faced with the prospect of paying tolls as high as \$1200/year (or \$2400/year, if we were both commuting) just to get to work, plus additional tolls every time we visited family or friends in Oregon.

My household would consider the high-cost tolls a barrier to choosing to reside or work

**P-0483-001**

As discussed in Chapter 3 (Section 3.5) of the DEIS, tolling could impact low-income or minority populations by introducing a new expense that could be proportionally a greater share of total income for low-income individuals, requiring that all users obtain transponders for electronic toll collection, and instituting a new tolling system that could be confusing or difficult to communicate to individuals with limited English proficiency.

However, without a toll, the project likely could not be funded, the new capacity on the bridge would be filled faster, and transit ridership would be lower. Including a toll would reduce congestion, improve travel times, and could result in a slight improvement in air quality by reducing emissions, which would benefit all users. See Chapter 3 (Section 3.5) of the DEIS and Chapter 3 (Section 3.5) of the FEIS for a description of all benefits of the project, including tolling, to environmental justice (EJ) populations. Proposed measures to reduce the potential impacts to low-income or minority residents as a result of instituting a toll are listed in Chapter 3 (Section 3.5) of the FEIS. Potential impacts to EJ populations would be offset by the provision of new transit options in the project corridor.

This issue of tolling impacts to businesses was addressed as part of the Economics analysis and is described in detail in the Economics Technical Report. This report, and Section 3.4 of the DEIS, note that the increased costs of incurred by the tolls would generally be offset by the improved travel options and travel times. Under existing and No Build conditions, congestion delays and high crash rates have significant costs for local businesses and travelers; and improving these conditions is one of the purposes of the project. Tolling could discourage home-based shopping trips from Clark County to points in northern Oregon, such as Hayden Island. However, the variable-rate toll structure that was evaluated in the DEIS allows for different rates to be charged by time of day. Therefore, discretionary trips, such as those between Oregon and

P-0483-001

in Vancouver and I expect many other households (including high-income households) would have the same view. In addition, workers in many high-income jobs work variable and unpredictable hours, which makes mass transit a less realistic alternative (because the workers cannot be confident that trains or buses will be running frequently at the times the workers need them). If the proposed high-cost toll program is put into place, I am concerned the following impacts will disproportionately affect Vancouver communities and I urge the task force to consider and address them (and to consider whether a lower-cost toll program is feasible):

1. Vancouver businesses may have increased difficulty recruiting workers and filling positions, both because (a) Oregon workers may be unwilling to apply for those jobs (knowing they would pay tolls to commute to Washington), and (b) fewer Washington workers may be available to fill the positions (if Washington residents move to Oregon to avoid tolls, particularly in two-income homes where at least one worker is already employed in Oregon);
2. Vancouver businesses may experience a "brain drain" or shortage of high-qualified workers for professional positions because those workers tend to work variable hours and will not be able to rely on mass transit or be eligible for financial relief from the burden of tolls;
3. New businesses may elect not to locate in Vancouver because of the difficulty in recruiting workers and filling positions;
4. Potential new Vancouver residents may elect to settle in Oregon instead, to avoid tolls if any member of the household plans to work in Oregon, resulting in decreased property values in Vancouver; and
5. For the reasons described in numbered paragraph (1) above, more Vancouver residents may relocate to Oregon, resulting in a further decrease in property values in Vancouver.

Taking into consideration the numbers of people who currently commute between the two states, I ask the task force to carefully consider whether proposed tolls would have the apparently unanticipated effect of causing the very people who can best stimulate Vancouver's future growth and prosperity to flee Vancouver for other communities in order to avoid tolls. As an alternative, I urge the task force to consider whether the toll program can be restructured to impose tolls that are significantly lower than those currently described.

Thank you for your consideration.

Washington for retail purposes could be taken in off-peak hours when toll rates are at their lowest, reducing the effect of the tolls on these types of trips. Also, CRC would provide improved transit connections between Clark County and Oregon, offering travelers alternative methods to paying the tolls to reach destinations across the river.