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June 26, 2008

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

Re: Draft EIS Response

- L-007-001** | The Cowlitz-Wahkiakum Council of Governments, a regional planning agency comprised of 29 general and special purpose governments and non-profit agencies in the two county region, submits the following comments, as drafted at its June 26, 2008 board meeting:
- L-007-002** | The I-5 corridor is critical to the present and future economic base of the Cowlitz-Wahkiakum region. Thousands of tons of raw to finished goods are shipped daily from area industries and ports, to and from all points on the globe, with a significant amount hauled up and down I-5 to and through the Portland-Vancouver metropolitan area. Our pulp, paper and other wood products industries, for example, rely heavily on the ability to truck raw and finished materials to points south in Oregon and California and east up the Columbia River Gorge and over Highway 26.
- It's imperative that the Columbia River crossings be constructed with maximum forethought as to its ability to handle the current and future freight and goods moving up and down the West Coast, from Vancouver, B.C., to San Diego, CA. and points east. Increased delays caused by bridge congestion coupled with high fuel prices will have a detrimental affect on freight mobility and the fiscal bottom line for business, industries and shippers along the West Coast. It is with good reason that the I-5 corridor has been designated one of the nation's top high priority corridors out of many in the National Highway System and one of six "Corridors of the Future", as recently proclaimed by the USDOT.
- L-007-003** | Maximum effort should target reducing or at least minimizing the negative impacts of single occupant vehicles (SOV) using the Columbia River Crossing corridor. Growth projections in southwest Washington and the Portland metropolitan area point to increased travel across the Columbia River by workers, goods and services. Recently introduced proposals to reduce lanes on a new crossing facility, citing higher fuel prices and efforts needed to reduce greenhouse gases, will only lead to maintaining and perhaps worsening the congestion that exists now. Fast, efficient and effective transit options that move a maximum number of commuters are essential components of the final decision, be it bus rapid transit lanes or light rail. Minimizing growth in SOV use translates into maintaining freight and goods capacity so vital to all interests in not only the crossing corridor area but up and down the West Coast.
- L-007-004** |
- L-007-005** |
- L-007-006** |

Counties of Cowlitz and Wahkiakum • Cities of Longview, Kelso, Woodland, Kalama, Castle Rock and Rainier, Oregon • Town of Cathlamet • Ports of Longview, Kalama, Woodland and Wahkiakum #1 & #2 • Cowlitz PUD • School Districts of Longview, Kalama, Kelso, Woodland and Castle Rock • Beacon Hill Sewer District • Cowlitz 2 Fire & Rescue • Cowlitz County Fire District #5 • Lower Columbia College • Lower Columbia Community Action Council • Cowlitz & Lower Columbia Economic Development Councils • Longview Housing Authority • Kelso-Longview Chamber of Commerce

L-007-001

Thank you for taking the time to submit your comments on the I-5 CRC DEIS.

L-007-002

The ability to efficiently move freight in the region is critical to the overall health of our economy. As such, the CRC project is designed to improve freight mobility on I-5, as well as make it safer and easier for trucks to get on and off I-5 to reach businesses and Port facilities. A Freight Working Group met every other month to advise and inform the Columbia River Crossing project team about freight issues. The group provided insight, observation, and recommendation about the needs for truck access and mobility within the corridor; characterized the horizontal and vertical clearances, acceleration/deceleration, and stopping performance needs of trucks that must be accommodated; and provided meaningful comments on the effect of geometric, regulatory, and capacity changes on truck movements in the corridor.

L-007-003

In addition to a highway toll, the CRC project has proposed a variety of TSM/TDM measures to complement the infrastructure improvements. See Chapter 2 of this FEIS for a description of the TSM/TDM measures currently proposed as part of this project.

L-007-004

The LPA includes a 10-lane bridge over the Columbia River.

L-007-005

Preferences for specific alternatives or options, as expressed in comments received before and after the issuance of the DEIS, were shared with local sponsor agencies to inform decision making. Following the close of the 60-day DEIS public comment period in July 2008, the

Columbia River Crossing Project - Draft EIS Response
 June 26, 2008
 Page 2

- L-007-007** We understand that paying for a new facility will involve user tolls. We support a tolling plan that takes into consideration the regional needs of the Portland-Vancouver area, one that is not limited solely to the bridge facility. Long term tolling should be a component of an overall strategy that supports enhanced transit options, higher density residential development along transit corridors, and encourages mixed use development throughout the metropolitan region.
- L-007-008** The link between Cowlitz County and the greater Portland-Vancouver metropolitan area is more important than ever. The distance is shrinking with changes in logistics, commuter travel patterns and increased interest in transit options for Cowlitz County commuters. In conclusion, we cannot over emphasize the importance of maintaining freight capacity for any selected options for a river crossing.

Sincerely,



Dave Andrew, Chair

SHH:nh

cc: CWCOG Board
 Dick Ford, Chair, Washington State Transportation Commission
 Paula Hammond, Secretary, Washington State Department of Transportation

007 CRC EIS Response sh06-08

CRC project's six local sponsor agencies selected a replacement I-5 bridge with light rail to Clark College as the project's Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA). These sponsor agencies, which include the Portland City Council, Vancouver City Council, TriMet Board, C-TRAN Board, Metro Council, RTC Board, considered the DEIS analysis, public comment, and a recommendation from the CRC Task Force when voting on the LPA.

For a more detailed description of highway, transit, and bicycle and pedestrian improvements associated with the LPA, see Chapter 2 of the FEIS.

L-007-006

See discussion of TSM/TDM measures, above.

L-007-007

Tolling was evaluated in the DEIS, and included in the LPA for two important reasons. First, a toll would help fund the construction of this project, as discussed in Chapter 4 of the FEIS. Second, a toll provides a valuable travel demand management tool that encourages travelers to take alternative modes (including light rail provided by this project), travel at off-peak periods, or reduce their auto trips. This demand management reduces congestion and extends the effective service of the facility.

L-007-008

Thank you for taking the time to submit your comments on the I-5 CRC DEIS.