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June 23, 2008



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JUN 27 2008

Columbia River Crossing

Ms. Heather Gundersen
Environmental Manager
Columbia River Crossing
700 Washington St., Suite 300
Vancouver, WA 98660

Dear Ms. Gundersen;

B-039-001 As Portland's official destination marketing office, Travel Portland is deeply interested in issues affecting access and travel throughout the region. As one of the major entry points for visitors coming to the Portland region and Oregon, the Columbia River Crossing is of particular significance. We appreciate the opportunity to comment on the draft environmental impact study for the Columbia River Crossing project.

Travel Portland's board-level Community Action Committee has been following this project and has identified the following priorities:

- B-039-002**
 - We support the replacement bridge option over the supplemental bridge idea. The replacement bridge option offers better congestion relief, improves safety, improves salmon habitat, improves river navigation, and keeps traffic moving on the existing bridge while the new one is being built.
- B-039-003**
 - We support light rail transit over bus rapid transit. The light rail option offers higher ridership levels, faster transit time, lower annual per-rider operating costs, and direct connections to the rest of the system at the Portland Expo Center. Light rail is also more attractive to visitors and can provide an efficient and exciting link between Portland and Vancouver, increasing tourism opportunities for both.

The Portland region receives worldwide attention and accolades for its transportation system—this attention is largely focused on light rail and streetcar systems. Adding this critical light rail link will enhance our reputation as a region with progressive, efficient and sustainable transportation infrastructure.
- B-039-004**
 - We encourage the inclusion of ample bicycle/pedestrian access. Bi-state cycle tours are becoming increasingly popular, and the current access is both difficult and dangerous. If possible, bicycle/pedestrian facilities should be located on the east side of the bridge, which offers beautiful views of the river, Mount Hood, sailboats, etc.
- B-039-005**
 - We are very concerned with some of the proposed Marine Drive alignments and their potential impact on the Portland Metropolitan Expo Center. How will the economic vitality of the Expo and the businesses around it be impacted with these alignments? How will the nearby wetlands be impacted? How would those impacts be minimized or mitigated?

B-039-001

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

B-039-002

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 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.

With the LPA, new bridges will replace the existing Interstate Bridges to carry I-5 traffic, light rail, pedestrians and bicyclists across the Columbia River. Light rail will extend from the Expo Center MAX Station in Portland to a station and park and ride at Clark College in Vancouver. Pedestrians and bicyclists would travel along a wider and safer path than exists today.

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

B-039-003

Thank you for your comment. 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.

B-039-006

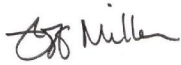
- We are also concerned with the proposed license plate-recognition tolling system for visitors who don't have transponders in their cars. We believe it would be poor public relations for Portland and Oregon to have visitors receive a bill later for having visited our region. Our understanding is that other west-coast toll bridges, for example in the Bay Area, include on-site payment options for drivers who don't have fast-passes. We recommend including this option for the CRC.

B-039-007

Visitors to our region spent \$3.6 billion in 2007 and supported 29,600 jobs, making the tourism/hospitality industry one of the area's key economic drivers. We urge you to seek solutions that both enhance the experiences of visitors and encourage continued travel and commerce between our states.

Thank you for the opportunity to bring the tourism industry's perspective to this discussion. Please let us know if there is any way we can be helpful in moving this project forward.

Sincerely,



Jeff Miller
President & CEO



Chris Erickson
Chair, Community Action Committee

B-039-004

As discussed in the DEIS, a replacement bridge over the Columbia River will include dramatically improved bicycle and pedestrian facilities by providing:

- A new 16 to 20 foot multi-use pathway over the Columbia River completely separated from vehicle traffic due to the design of the Stacked Transit Highway Bridge
- Protections from traffic noise, exhaust and debris for pedestrians and bicyclists on the river crossing
- More direct connections on each side of the river, consisting of stairs, ramps, and elevators, as well as pathway extensions that connect in with existing or planned facilities and public transit
- Many new or enhanced sidewalks, bike lanes, and crosswalks near the bridge and throughout the project area

Since the publication of the DEIS in May 2008, and the selection of the LPA in July 2008, the CRC project team has continued to work with the Pedestrian and Bicycle Advisory Committee and project partners to refine route and facility design. The updated design, as described in Chapter 2 (Section 2.2) of the FEIS, is the outcome of a long collaboration process.

B-039-005

Following the publication of the DEIS in May 2008, and the selection of the LPA in July 2008, the CRC project team established a Stakeholder Group to provide feedback on the function and design of the Marine Drive interchange. This advisory group was comprised of a wide range of stakeholders with strong interests in the final design of this interchange including Metro; TriMet; the Oregon Department of Transportation; the City of Portland; the Port of Portland; trucking and distributions companies; the Audubon Society; nearby property owners or operators, such as Diversified Marine and the Metropolitan Exposition

Recreation Commission; as well as community members from the surrounding Bridgeton, Kenton, and East Columbia Neighborhoods.

As discussed in Chapter 2 (Section 2.7) of the FEIS, working with this advisory group, the CRC project team conducted studies that analyzed the traffic operations, property impacts, and potential environmental effects for a range of potential interchange designs. The Marine Drive interchange design included in the LPA that is analyzed in the FEIS was developed with this stakeholder advisory group to balance many competing interests, including freight mobility, property impacts to nearby properties, and environmental impacts. More detailed information regarding this process and its outcome is available in the Marine Drive Interchange Alignment Recommendation Process: Final Summary Report and Stakeholder Recommendation, available online in the project's electronic library at www.columbiarivercrossing.org or by contacting the project office.

B-039-006

Details and policies for the tolling system will be decided by the transportation commissions and legislatures of both states. However, the project has proposed and assumed that an electronic tolling system will be used. Electronic tolling collection (ETC) is a cashless toll collection system using the latest electronic technology. ETC promotes free-flowing traffic by eliminating the need for toll booths and allowing all vehicles to pay a toll without stopping.

ETC systems in use today allow drivers to purchase an inexpensive, credit card sized transponder that is placed on the inside windshield of their car. When driving through the toll collection point, radio equipment above the road scans the transponder and deducts the toll from the user's account. User accounts could be linked to a credit or debit card, or they could be prepaid.

Infrequent travelers without a transponder would be charged via a video camera that can quickly scan and photograph license plates. A bill for the cost of the toll and a processing fee can be sent to the registered vehicle owner.

All personal information necessary to use the ETC system would be maintained by the State DOT, as is now being done with WSDOT's Good To Go! Program that is collecting tolls for facilities such as the Tacoma Narrows bridge. The use of this information, like all personal information provided to the state, will follow state privacy guidelines.

B-039-007

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