



# BUCKMAN COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION

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Oregon Department of Transportation  
 Washington State Department of Transportation  
 METRO  
 Southwest Washington Regional Transportation Council  
 City of Portland  
 City of Vancouver

Dear Friends,

**N-023-001** This letter is to share the thoughts of the Buckman Community Association with the decision makers for the Columbia River Crossing (CRC).

The Columbia River Crossing will be the single largest public works project in the history of the Pacific Northwest. It will determine what the future transportation systems in the Portland/Vancouver area will be. There are a range of options being considered for the Columbia River Crossing, from "no build" to building a new bridge with 12 traffic lanes plus light rail, with the 12-lane build-out seeming to be the most likely choice.

**N-023-002** But the regional context is changing dramatically, even as the CRC decision is being considered.

- o The price of gas and diesel has skyrocketed since the CRC was first proposed, and shows no signs of returning to historic lower prices. The number of cars crossing the I-5 bridge has already dropped recently. The CRC may be building highway capacity that will never be needed.
- o The impact of global warming is becoming more and more apparent and Oregon and Washington have resolved to cut future carbon emissions. But the auto-oriented CRC proposals will increase, not cut carbon emissions.

**N-023-004** The 12-lane bridge is proposed to be funded by charging tolls. Perhaps charging tolls on the existing bridge would validate the concept that there are enough drivers willing to pay the toll to justify increasing the number of lanes. But it may also show that existing congestion can be relieved and the need for new lanes reduced just by charging tolls now.

**N-023-005** The CRC decision is being rushed to meet a deadline for Federal funds for highway construction. But a new administration in Washington D.C. may make it easier to receive Federal funds for alternatives to highway construction.

**N-023-006** For all the reasons cited above, we ask that the Columbia River Crossing project not proceed with a major increase in the automobile capacity of the I-5 bridge at this time.

Respectfully,

Buckman Community Association Board

## N-023-001

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

## N-023-002

Significant increases in oil prices can have both short term and long term effects on travel behavior. In the short term, the options for responding to rising gas prices are more limited, and include driving less and/or changing from driving to walking, biking or transit for at least some trips. During recent increases in gasoline prices transit use increased and off-peak highway travel decreased. Peak period highway travel changed little.

Over the long term, there are more options for adjusting to changes in gasoline prices, besides changing driving behavior. Technological advances and legislative mandates can increase fuel efficiency standards in the long term. In turn, as older vehicles wear out, more consumers can replace them with more fuel efficient vehicles. Automobile manufacturers are developing and will continue to develop new vehicle and engine technologies that require much less, or even no, petroleum-based fuels. This trend is already happening as evidenced by the growing popularity of gasoline-electric hybrid and small electric vehicles.

## N-023-003

Based on modeling and analysis, the CRC LPA is expected to significantly increase transit ridership and reduce the number of vehicles crossing the river. This shift toward transit, reduction in auto crossings, reduced congestion, removal of bridge lifts, and lower accident rates are all factors that contribute to lower CO2 emissions with the project than without it. These factors will also make it easier for the region to meet goals for reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions.

While there was no standard threshold or standardized methodology for estimating GHG emissions when the DEIS was being developed, the project team worked with federal and state agencies to develop an appropriate analysis methodology that would allow disclosure of impacts and a comparison of alternatives. Chapter 3 (Section 3.19) of the DEIS summarized the results of GHG emissions and climate change analysis conducted for the DEIS alternatives. Further detail was included in the Energy Technical Report that was released along with the DEIS. Following the public comment period on the DEIS, the Metro Council and Portland City Council requested the CRC project team secure independent review of the GHG evaluation conducted for the DEIS. The “Columbia River Crossing Greenhouse Gas Emission Analysis Expert Review Panel Report” (January 8, 2009) describes the activities and findings of the independent review panel. The panel concluded that the GHG evaluation methods and the findings in the DEIS were valid and reasonable. They also found that the findings were likely conservative, and that the LPA would likely reduce GHG emissions even more than estimated in the DEIS. The GHG and climate change analysis in Chapter 3 (Section 3.19) of the FEIS updates the analysis that was in DEIS, but the basic conclusion that the LPA would have lower emissions than No-Build Alternative remains unchanged.

The CRC project embodies nearly all of the Governor's Climate Change Integration Group's recommendations for planning transportation projects to reduce GHG emissions. These recommendations include highway tolling, relieving chronic highway bottlenecks, increasing transit, and increasing pedestrian and bicycle facilities. Meeting the legislative goal to reduce future statewide emissions below 1990 levels will require numerous actions in all sectors. There is no requirement or expectation in law or policy that any single action by itself should or can have the effect of reducing future emissions below existing emissions. Such broad reductions can only result from a wide variety of actions. As stated in the DEIS, the preferred alternative by itself would reduce GHG emissions

compared to No-Build Alternative. This helps move GHG emissions in the right direction, and when combined with other actions, can play an integral role in helping the state meet its overall greenhouse gas reduction goals.

**N-023-004**

Modeling has indicated that tolling I-5 without making the improvements that are part of the CRC project would not meet the project's Purpose and Need. This does not mean that some form of tolling prior to constructing CRC couldn't be implemented. The ultimate decision on any tolling options will be made by both the Washington and Oregon Transportation Commissions.

**N-023-005**

You are correct that the project was seeking a Record of Decision by late 2010, in order to be better positioned for funding in 2011. Project staff and local leaders had been working, and continue to work, closely with staff and elected officials in Washington D.C. However, the CRC project was not rushed. As discussed in Chapter 2 (Section 2.7) and Appendix B of the FEIS, the project development process has been long and thorough and has included extensive public involvement efforts. The project is seeking a Record of Decision in December 2011.

**N-023-006**

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.