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COLUMBIA RIVER CROSSING DRAFT EIS  
PUBLIC HEARING

WEDNESDAY, MAY 28, 2008

RED LION HOTEL  
VANCOUVER, WASHINGTON

00033

O-036-001

1 TOM BUCHELE: Hi, my name is Tom  
 2 Buchele. I'm with the Pacific  
 3 Environmental Advocacy Center, which  
 4 usually goes by the acronym PEAC, P-E-A-C.  
 5 Our address is 10015 Southwest Terwilliger  
 6 Boulevard in Portland.

O-036-002

7 PEAC submitted a letter to you all  
 8 about a week ago asking you to extend the  
 9 public comment period for this draft EIS.  
 10 We learned late this afternoon that you  
 11 had denied the request and I would like to  
 12 talk about that and talk about the NEPA  
 13 process, which we have heard mentioned  
 14 here.



O-036-003

15 We are all still now in a process of  
 16 going through the DEIS. We haven't been  
 17 all the way through it, so I am not going  
 18 to really say too much about the actual  
 19 content of the document until I have fully  
 20 reviewed it. I don't think it would  
 21 really be fair to say too much.

22 We submitted this letter on behalf of  
 23 13 organizations, including the Northwest  
 24 Environmental Defense Center. I am here  
 25 tonight specifically speaking for them.

**O-036-001**

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

**O-036-002**

NEPA requires a comment period for a DEIS to be no less than 45 days. Prior to issuing the CRC DEIS, FTA, FHWA and the other project Co-Leads (WSDOT, ODOT, RTC, Metro, TriMet and C-TRAN) decided to extend this to 60 days in order to allow additional time for review and comment. Section 6002 (g)(2)(A) of SAFETEA-LU (Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient, Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users), the federal transportation reauthorization bill, established a comment period of “no more than 60 days” for DEISs. FTA and FHWA did not see “good cause” [(Section 6002 (g)(2)(A)(ii)] for extending the current comment period beyond the 60 days that were already being provided.

The DEIS comment period is only one opportunity during the NEPA process for the public, agencies and tribes to review information and provide input. As discussed in Appendix B of the DEIS, over the three years prior to the publication of the DEIS, the project provided opportunities for stakeholders to comment on numerous components of the draft including the Purpose and Need, Range of Alternatives, methodologies for analyzing impacts to various elements of the environment and preliminary findings. Project staff also participated in meetings with neighborhood groups, business organizations, and other potentially affected stakeholders. Strategies for communicating with limited-English, low-income, and minority populations have been developed by, and facilitated through, local communities, the CRC Community Environmental Justice Group (CEJG) and community-based organizations. As an example, CEJG sponsored informal Q&A sessions that occurred during the DEIS comment period. Certain project materials, including information related to the DEIS and associated open houses and public hearings, are translated into Spanish, Russian, and

Vietnamese, and interpreters are available at project open houses by request.

**O-036-003**

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1 We were quite disappointed by the  
2 decision to not lengthen the public  
3 comment process. 60 days for a document  
4 that is this lengthy and detailed is just  
5 flatly inadequate.  
6 My students and I drafted a  
7 five-and-a-half page detailed letter  
8 explaining why we thought the comment  
9 period should be lengthened. The response  
10 from you all was one page and did not  
11 respond to a single point that we made in  
12 the letter.  
13 And I have to say that -- if that is  
14 indicative of the way you are going to  
15 respond to public comments on this  
16 document, I think we are all going to be  
17 very disappointed.  
18 The DEIS comment period is the only  
19 time during the NEPA process where the  
20 Agency has to be respond specifically to  
21 the public's comments. It's unique and  
22 it's an important process. And again,  
23 60 days is simply not long not enough for  
24 a document that is this detailed and this  
25 lengthy.

In addition, since the DEIS comment period there have been numerous community meetings, open houses, and public hearings by project sponsors, providing more opportunities for public input and comment. In total, as of March 2011, CRC staff have participated in over 900 public events to directly reach over 27,000 people since October 2005.

**O-036-003**

See response to comment O-036-002.

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**O-036-003** | 1 We pointed out specific and numerous  
2 examples where the Federal Highway  
3 Administration has extended the deadline  
4 for very similar projects. Again, you  
5 made no response to those points that we  
6 you made.  
7 The purpose of NEPA as someone said  
8 is to stop and consider all the  
9 information that is available before you  
10 make a decision. It's a very good law.  
11 It serves an important purpose. And  
12 60 days is simply not long enough in our  
13 opinion.  
**O-036-004** | 14 I will say having started to look at  
15 the document, that the range of  
16 alternatives does seem to leave out  
17 certain viable alternatives including  
18 alternatives that don't increase car  
19 capacity. And the purpose in need  
20 statement seems designed to result in a  
21 bridge that does increase car capacity.  
22 We are looking under NEPA whether that is  
23 proper.  
**O-036-005** | 24 Thank you very much for allowing me  
25 to comment.

**O-036-004**

The Purpose and Need is based on extensive analysis of the existing and projected transportation problems in the I-5 CRC corridor, and reflects extensive feedback from the public and stakeholder groups. The Purpose and Need focuses largely on metrics that do not inherently require substantial, or exclusive, increases in highway capacity. The purpose statement is intentionally worded so as to allow consideration of a wide range of solutions including demand management, transit, highway, tolling, and other options for addressing the stated needs. Following the development of the Purpose and Need statement, analysis of a wide range of alternatives, and input from the public, agencies and stakeholders on those alternatives and analysis, it became clear that that the Purpose and Need could not be met by any single type of improvement. It is best met by a multimodal alternative that improves highway, transit, and bicycle and pedestrian facilities in the I-5 corridor, and adds tolling to the highway river crossing.

The evaluation of the five alternatives in the DEIS was preceded by an extensive evaluation and screening of a wide array of possible solutions to the CRC project's Purpose and Need statement. Chapter 2 of the DEIS (Section 2.5) explains how the project's Sponsoring Agencies generated ideas and solicited the public, stakeholders, other agencies, and tribes for ideas on how to meet the Purpose and Need. This effort produced a long list of potential solutions, many of which were non-auto oriented options such as various transit modes and techniques for operating the existing highway system more efficiently without any capital investment. These options were evaluated for whether and how they met the project's Purpose and Need, and the findings were reviewed by project sponsors, the public, agencies, and other stakeholders. Alternatives that included only TDM/TSM strategies, or provided only transit improvements, would provide benefits, but could only address a very limited portion of the project's purpose and need. This extensive analysis found that in order for an alternative to meet the

**O-036-006**

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CERTIFICATE OF REPORTER

STATE OF WASHINGTON )  
County of Clark)

I, Cathy S. Taylor, a notary public  
for the State of Washington do hereby  
certify that I transcribed to the best of  
my ability said proceedings written by me  
in machine shorthand and thereafter  
reduced to typewriting; and that the  
foregoing transcript constitutes a full,  
true and accurate record of said  
proceedings and of the whole thereof.

Witness my hand and notarial seal  
this 16th day of June, 2008.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Cathy S. Taylor, RPR, CSR  
Notary Public for the State of Washington  
My Commission expires April 15, 2009

six "needs" included in the Purpose and Need (described in Chapter 1 of the DEIS), it had to provide at least some measure of capital improvements to I-5 in the project area. Alternatives that did not include such improvements did not adequately address the seismic vulnerability of the existing I-5 bridges, traffic congestion on I-5, or the existing safety problems caused by sub-standard design of the highway in this corridor. The DEIS evaluated alternatives with more demand management (higher toll) and increased transit service with less investment in highway infrastructure improvements (Alternatives 4 and 5) compared to the toll and transit service levels included in Alternatives 2 and 3. The additional service and higher toll provided only marginal reductions in I-5 vehicle volumes, and they came primarily at the cost of greater traffic diversion to I-205. This analysis found that a more balanced investment in highway and transit, as represented by Alternatives 2 and 3, performed considerably better on a broad set of criteria.

**O-036-005**

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

**O-036-006**

Comment source noted.