

Public comment on the CRC submitted for the record.



To:  
 CRC c/o Heather Gundersen 1312 SW Texas St.  
 700 Washington St. #300 Portland, OR 97219  
 Vancouver, WA 98660 May 20, 2008

**P-0434-001**

NOT

Re: the proposed Columbia River Crossing: it will accelerate commuter traffic; CRC means unaffordable new infrastructure for conditions that are irretrievably passing away. *GLOBAL WARMING,*

As a Portland resident concerned with area growth and sustainability, I am strongly opposed to the building of a 12-lane I-5 bridge across the Columbia. I second criticisms made by Councilor Robert Liberty (Oregonian 5/18/08), economist Joe Cortright ("Before building it, tell us who'll pay for it," Oregonian op-ed), and the Coalition For a Liveable Future's paper "Climate Smart Columbia River Crossing." The Portland Mercury also carried an excellent critique, "Bridge To Disaster," in its issue of 3/13/08.

I confess that I would not relish the role of a public official with decision making responsibility on this proposal-- to listen to the unrealistic demands of Clark County commuters, construction contractors, operators in the imperiled trucking industry, and anyone else wishing to benefit, fleetingly, while placing a long-term financial burden on taxpayers and state and local government. Nonetheless too many strong warnings of uncomfortable and unavoidable change now demand to be recognized as reasons to abandon the unwieldy scale of this project.

**P-0434-002**

1. "Conditions irretrievably passing away"-- would include affordable auto and truck fuel! Only a few visionaries were seeing \$4/gallon gas and diesel when this bridge's planning began in 2001. In 2008, plenty of analysts are predicting the price will rise even higher. This will kill mass commuting, no matter how ingrained the 30-to-40 one-way daily commute has become to many in contemporary generations. Such commuting is a recent phenomenon and a temporary one. The end will feel like a tragedy to many, and home investments will suffer further, but this has already started (not just with subprime mortgage recklessness, but with Peak Oil making fuel too expensive for the majority of people to live far from their workplaces.) Furthermore, tragedies happen on a sliding scale-- the hordes of refugees in WWII might willingly trade their situations with stranded commuters, for example.

Relocalization, the planning strategy that puts most community facilities and needs back within close reach of

**P-0434-001**

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.

Your substantive points in this comment will be addressed in the context of the numbered comments below.

**P-0434-002**

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

**P-0434-002** Residents, decreasing consumption of transportation fuel, is the strategy advanced by students of the now global predicament of expensive energy. Here I recommend the work of Prof. Richard Heinberg (latest book, "Peak Everything") and of author James Howard Kunstler ("The Long Emergency.")

As for long-haul trucking, much freight will have to be moved back to the railroads-- rebuilt and expanded railroads. Smaller trucks, becoming more fuel efficient, could once more make the local deliveries; they could load up at trackside warehouses (a common sight at companies like Railway Express "in olden times.") Semi-trailers are about to semi-disappear from the highways and bridges. There is nothing governments can do to restore their profitability. Let's remember, railroads built this country and trains are far more fuel-efficient hauling freight, while also outperforming airplanes in moving passengers without such a big carbon footprint.

**P-0434-003**. "Accelerating climate change, not traffic"-- "in an era of climate change-- when a state task force has recommended drastically cutting greenhouse gas emissions to 75 percent below 1990 levels-- increasing lanes and thereby increasing commuter traffic is simply unacceptable." (Mercury, 3/13/08.)

"...building more roads increases greenhouse gas emissions, even when improved fuel efficiency of future vehicles is taken into account, and even if the highway expansion initially improves congestion...also assume that new highway capacity will gradually be filled by new trips, and that congestion and stop-and-go driving will gradually increase to approximately the same level experienced prior to the highway expansion." (Sightline Institute of Seattle, quoted in the Mercury.)

In my point #1 I contend that commuting is doomed, so why would I [redacted] also state that CRC adds to climate change?\*

Well, many Americans are determined to keep driving; our national government is reaching for any fuel source, no matter how polluting. Corn ethanol manufacture has a large carbon footprint. Mining tar sands in Canada etc uses up precious natural gas, pollutes water, emits gases. Wars for oil pollute mightily, and the military campaigns to get oil burn up a significant part of the "booty."

As global temperatures rise, new damaging results keep getting discovered, often more dangerous than previously-known effects. There is lately the "methane bomb"-- in the northern tundras and steppes permafrost is melting, releasing quantities of the frozen methane they contain. Methane is about 22 times more potent than CO2 as a greenhouse gas... cue the ominous music soundtrack.

\*Underlining here is in error.

the growing popularity of gasoline-electric hybrid and small electric vehicles.

### **P-0434-003**

While there was no standard threshold or standardized methodology for estimating greenhouse gas 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. The DEIS, Chapter 3, Section 3.19.8, 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 CRC project team was requested by the Metro Council and Portland City Council to 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, remains unchanged.

Based on the 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 crossing, 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 GHG emissions.

- P-0434-003** For more thoughtful reading on potential reactions from the planet to our emissions, I recommend Under A Green Sky by the University of Washington's Peter D. Ward. We are now growing past 6 billion on this earth; we just don't know exactly what might hit us if we don't stop indulging our old habits, if we deny that we need to make major changes.
- P-0434-004** B. The unaffordable, possibly unfinanceable \$4.2 billion plus-- in his Sunday Oregonian article, "Is this project the best deal for Oregon taxpayers?" Robert Liberty exposes what, to me, is an alarmingly flimsy set of schemes for funding CRC. He also details misplaced priorities where filling other local transportation needs are concerned. I add to his list the difficulties of selling government bonds, tax-free or not. Auctions offering local and state bonds have been held with little or no sales; interest rates have sometimes been hiked imprudently high to move some bonds. There is a drawn-out global credit crisis unfolding, widely reported and analyzed. Some state baldly that major banks and government coffers are essentially insolvent, and that the printing of dollars by the Fed is driving an inflation that has a hazy ceiling. Let us not go into this huge debt. It is a time to retrench, be frugal, not a time to preach that illusory gospel of constant growth, and nebulous new jobs--if we play along with the movers and shakers.
- P-0434-005** A slower, more modest, piecemeal approach such as that recommended by Metro Councilor Liberty should cause no greater frustration than the lengthy disruption of a major bridge build. Waiting things out will show that traffic volume is on the decrease, due to the fuel expense.
- P-0434-006**
- P-0434-007** In sum: Alternatives to the big-project mentality seem to have been ignored or kept out of the CRC official paper. I want them included and given due consideration, some of it "out of the box." I believe that withdrawing from the 12-lane proposal is the best course. That means continuing to use the present I-5 crossing. Workable modifications could include putting tolls on the present bridge to pay for ramp improvements, and to stop subsidizing sprawl by recovering some of its costs.) Perhaps a side bridge for transit could be built; besides light rail, electric hybrid buses could be chosen if they are truly fuel-efficient. They will need their exclusive lanes or tracks for fast travel.
- P-0434-008** I urge public officials to use the veto to prevent rushing into a 12-lane boondoggle, whose time has already come and gone.

Sincerely,

  
Thaddeus Kozlowski

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#### **P-0434-004**

Please refer to Chapter 4 of the FEIS for a description of the current plans for funding construction and operation of the LPA. This discussion provides an updated assessment of likely funding sources for this project, though it is not common practice to receive funding commitments prior to completion of the alternative selection process. As described in the FEIS, project funding is expected to come from a variety of local, state, and federal sources, with federal funding and tolls providing substantial revenue for the construction. As Oregon and Washington businesses and residents will benefit from the project's multi-modal improvements, both states have been identified as contributors to the project. As jurisdictions on both sides of the river seek to encourage non-auto travel, tolls are not anticipated for bikes, pedestrians, and transit users. Lastly, CRC assumes funds allocated to other projects and purposes would remain dedicated to those projects and purposes.

#### **P-0434-005**

Modeling has indicated that tolling I-5 without making the improvements that are part of the CRC project, as proposed by Metro Councilor Liberty, 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 must be made by both the Washington and Oregon Transportation Commissions.

#### **P-0434-006**

Please see response to comment P-0434-002 above.

#### **P-0434-007**

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



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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 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.

#### **P-0434-008**

Thank you for your comment. Preferences for specific alternatives or options, as expressed in comments received before and after the

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