



Testimony on the I-5 Columbia River Bridge Replacement Project
Submitted by Martin Callery, Chief Commercial Officer, on behalf of the
Oregon International Port of Coos Bay

Submitted to the
Joint Committee on the I-5 Bridge Replacement Project
Monday, February 11, 2013 • Oregon State Capitol; Salem, Oregon

Co-chairs Starr, Beyer, Bentz and Read, and members of the Committee, I am Martin Callery, Chief Commercial Officer of the Oregon International Port of Coos Bay. I appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony about the I-5 Columbia River Crossing to this committee.

I also have the privilege of serving on the Oregon Freight Advisory Committee, the Southwest Area Commission on Transportation, the Lane Area Commission on Transportation, and the Oregon Rail Users League. Additionally, I am actively involved in several other transportation and trade advocacy groups throughout the state.

While the Columbia River Crossing is geographically separated from southern Oregon by several hundred miles, it is as critically important to our region as any of our state highways, because it is a vital component of the Interstate 5 trade corridor which provides for the timely and competitive movement of goods to markets north, south and internationally.

I'm sure you've often heard that Oregon is a trade-dependent state, and even though portions of southern Oregon have rail access, and the Port of Coos Bay provides some international and domestic marine shipping access, the majority of freight movements throughout the region are by truck, which use the state and federal highway system. And even as the Port of Coos Bay is working to increase utilization of both rail and marine modes, the Interstate 5 corridor, from Mexico to Canada, will remain an essential link in the multimodal system that benefits shippers in southern Oregon and statewide.

Agricultural commodities such as cranberries, milk, organic food products, and animal feed, seafood products including salmon, tuna and Dungeness crab, manufactured forest products, high value mineral commodities, structural steel bridge components, and even consumer products such as flowers and books – all produced in or distributed from southern Oregon – move north to Washington, Canada and connections with other transportation modes in Portland and the Puget Sound region. And right now the existing Interstate 5 crossing of the Columbia River between Portland and Vancouver is an ever increasing bottleneck to the efficient flow of those products, eroding the competitiveness of Oregon business and limiting well-paying job opportunities for Oregonians.

As Oregon and the Pacific Northwest start to see and benefit from an upswing in economic activity, trucks continue to be critical to the U.S. economy, accounting for 67 percent of the national freight tonnage, and estimated to be a \$600 billion industry. Additionally qualified drivers can and do earn high wages in an industry needing more than 100,000 new drivers each year.

During my time serving on the Oregon Freight Advisory Committee and other transportation advocacy groups, I have seen OFAC and the others generate many letters of support for the I-5 bridge project, and provide comments pertinent to the physical infrastructure and various components of the project. However, it is really past time for additional letters, comments and discussions.

The I-5 Columbia River Crossing must move forward now, so that the Portland/Vancouver metropolitan region, the Columbia/Snake River trade corridor and State of Oregon are prepared to accommodate and benefit from increases in domestic and international trade.

Additionally, all jobs created for the Columbia River Crossing will be an incremental factor in the recovery of the Pacific Northwest economy, and will eventually result in an upturn of economic opportunity throughout Oregon . . . if we move the project forward now, not later.

You have heard or will hear from others about the local issues resulting from increased use of the Interstate 5 corridor between Oregon and Washington; roadway congestion, increasing travel delays, rising transportation costs and environmental impacts. Without immediate action to move the Columbia River Crossing project forward, the impacts from these local issues are just going to get worse, and the solutions are all going to cost more.

The State of Oregon has made commitments to improving livability and quality of life for all of us, and much of the focus of the proposed efforts involve reducing environmental impacts from transportation. The longer the Columbia River Crossing project is delayed, the more difficult it will be for Oregon to achieve meaningful reductions in green-house gas emissions and reductions in fuel consumption for the region.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the importance of moving forward with the I-5 Columbia River Crossing, and thanks to the committee members for focusing on this increasingly important component of the multimodal transportation system serving Oregon and the Pacific coast.

OIPCB/MC/02-11-2013