

## **CRC Jobs**

By Floyd Smith

Smarter Bridge Committee

and

Association of Oregon Rail and Transit Advocates

to the

**Joint Committee on the Interstate-5 Bridge Replacement Project**

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Honorable co-chairs and members of the committee, I am Floyd Smith, board member of the Association of Oregon Rail and Transit Advocates, a nonprofit with about 200 members.

AORTA is an active member of the coalition known as the Smarter Bridge Committee. Many Smarter Bridge members are here today to lay the groundwork for transportation options of broader scope, wiser design and lower cost than the massive freeway known as the Columbia River Crossing.

I wish to speak briefly about CRC jobs.

Many claims about CRC jobs are wrong or confusing. And no wonder.

We continue to hear that we need this freeway-bridge construction to create jobs, and to sustain future jobs. But it is clear the presumed jobs growth would not be near what is promised in CRC documents.

But there is good news: Substitutions to the CRC, such as the widely touted Common Sense Alternative (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sPB1jtmHVkk>)

likely would create as many or more long-term, family-wage jobs for the Portland-Vancouver region than the CRC. And create them faster.

**916 Jobs Lost.** The CRC as envisioned by the freeway builders would severely disrupt local businesses. The FEIS reports that 916 jobs would be lost from 69 local businesses with an estimated annual sales loss of \$104 million.



The greatest impact is on Hayden Island where 39 businesses and 643 jobs would be eliminated by bridge approaches and ramps and interchanges.

- At Ruby Junction and along Marine Drive, 13 more Oregon businesses and 104 employees would be gone.
- And in Vancouver, 17 businesses and 169 employees would be taken.

The reach of this devastation goes beyond the elimination of 69 businesses and almost a thousand employees. This does not account for the financial harm to nearby businesses—some likely ruined—by disruption from the bridge construction.

**Jobs Growth.** In contrast to the reported jobs losses of about 1,000, the final environmental impact statement tells us that bridge design and construction will bring 20,000 jobs over 10 to 11 years.

The number is suspect, along with other CRC data.

A forensic certified public accountant, Tiffany Couch of Vancouver, has raised “red flags” about CRC financing. The media, most notably Willamette Week, have called into question the escalating costs of bridge planning, financing and jobs data.

Regarding CRC design and construction jobs, a noted Oregon economist Tim Duy, has stated: “The way most of us are going to think about this is 2,000 jobs per year over the life of the project.” It is not, as the CRC final impact statement proclaims, 20,000 construction jobs, which is ten times the number estimated by respected economists at about 2,000 that come and go each year.

The math is simple: The gain of 2,000 short-term design-and-construction jobs minus 1,000 long-term local-business jobs provides a possible net gain of 1,000 transitory jobs. It’s a bad bargain!

**Economic Development.** There is another important aspect to job creation here: regional economic development.

CRC staff members have touted the “Cost of Congestion Study to the Economy of the Portland Region,” completed in 2005, as substantial evidence for building the freeway bridges.



The study claims, “the...benefit from such an investment...supports 6,500 additional permanent jobs as of 2025.”

Unfortunately, the Cost of Congestion study fails to explain how this outcome was calculated. It gives no baseline data. It is meaningless.

We do know that the CRC will not solve traffic congestion. The project director herself, Nancy Boyd, has gone on record stating the CRC would not solve all congestion problems.

The traffic just stacks up at Delta Park and the Rose Quarter, choke points for Vancouver commuters driving to work in Portland. And the CRC would do little to alleviate truck traffic or fix water craft navigation challenges on the river below.

Members of the Smarter Bridge Committee want better economic development than the CRC can possibly provide.

Speaking now on behalf of AORTA, a Smarter Bridge Committee member, we believe jobs growth in the Portland-Vancouver region can be achieved by the Common Sense Alternative. It provides for phased bridge construction and creates long-term, family-wage jobs sooner than would the CRC—jobs in rail, construction and manufacturing.

This alternative, we believe, will create as many or more jobs than the CRC and displace fewer jobs because there would be no need for the massive property and business takings—and enormous jobs losses—required by the CRC.

The question remains: Why do CRC proponents continue to promote the jobs growth notions that are wrong or cannot be substantiated?

