

Bob Stacey
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Senators Lee Beyer and Bruce Starr, Co-Chairs
Representatives Cliff Bentz and Tobias Read, Co-Chairs
Joint Committee on I-5 Bridge Replacement Project
453 State Capitol
Salem, OR 97301

Re: House Bill 2800

Dear Co-Chairs and Joint Committee Members:

I submit my testimony today solely on my own behalf. In particular, I do not speak for Metro.

For reasons stated below, I oppose House Bill 2800. At the same time, I salute the bill's authors and the authors of the -14 amendments for including thoughtful limitations on ODOT's authority to issue bonds for this \$3.5 billion project. It is only simple prudence to condition Oregon's financial contribution on demonstrations that federal and Washington state funding are assured, that tolling revenue will achieve necessary levels, and that cost over-runs will not be laid at Oregon taxpayers' feet. But simple prudence has been in short supply throughout the history of this project.

Despite the care committee members are exercising, there remains vague language and undefined terms in the conditions you are considering, and I have attached my recommendations for tightening the language to ensure the state's taxpayers are better protected. My amendments borrow heavily from recommendations made by Joe Cortright, whose work in reviewing this project and its threats to Oregon's finances has been a significant service to the state over the past five years.

But first I want to repeat my recommendation that you reject rather than refine this legislation.

Placing conditions on the expenditure of state moneys to limit harm is not the same as avoiding the harm in the first place. Any way you cut it, this bill is bad for Oregon's taxpayers, Oregonians' quality of life, and the environment. At a minimum, there are better ways to achieve the transportation goals of this project, at a significantly lower cost.

Most of us in Oregon want light rail and improved bike and pedestrian access across the Columbia, and we also support reasonable measures to improve the reliability of passenger and freight movement at the I-5 bridges. Many in Washington want significant increases in highway capacity in the I-5 corridor, and they also support improvements in bike, pedestrian and transit access.

At the same time, many Clark County residents oppose extending light rail into their community, and many Oregonians oppose expanding the size of the I-5 bridge beyond the traffic-bearing capacity of I-5 through Portland.

There are many ways that the common interests of these communities can be met without confronting the inherent conflicts between them. However, the transportation agencies responsible for the CRC systematically eliminated more modest alternatives early in the project's planning, more than six years ago.

Instead, they sought to force agreement among various community interests by offering each group their biggest wish in exchange for their worst nightmare. Light rail opponents would be forced to accept rail, but would gain a giant expansion of highway capacity. Opponents of highway expansion would lose that fight, but gain a long-sought extension of light rail, along with bike and pedestrian improvements.

This bizarre arranged marriage has produced continued opposition from all sides. It has also resulted in a project that is grievously over-sized and costly.

It doesn't have to be this way. The I-5 bridge does not need to be ten lanes wide (17 at its widest point) in order to improve reliability and safety. Light rail can terminate at downtown Vancouver, or even Hayden Island, if Washington voters and political leaders are not yet willing to support extending it farther.

There are cost effective solutions for the transit, roadway and active transportation needs of this corridor. Indeed, there is a cottage industry populated by engineers, architects, economists and transportation planners on both sides of the Columbia that has developed an impressive array of alternatives to the CRC that could perform as well for at least a billion dollars less, and with less environmental, economic and political risk to the two states and the affected communities.

You do not need to believe that this \$3.5 billion mess is the only alternative, or fear that a vote against this bill will cause us to lose our only hope of building improvements in this corridor. In fact, voting no is the most effective way to ensure that we stop wasting time on a deeply flawed idea that may never be funded, and move toward building cost effective improvements sooner.

However, respecting the likelihood that a majority of your joint committee wishes to approve this bill, I urge you to improve the financial safeguards that you have drafted to date by considering the attached amendments.

Thank you for your consideration of this testimony and the attached amendments.

Very truly yours,

Bob Stacey

Cc: Joint Committee Members
Patrick Brennan, Committee Administrator

Stacey proposed amendments to HB 2800
February 18, 2013

Incorporate the -14 amendments dated 2/14/13 into the bill, with the following amendments to the -14s:

On page 2 of the 2800-14 amendments, line 4, delete "submitted" and insert "entered into".

On line 5, delete "application" and insert "with the states of Oregon and Washington".

On line 6, delete the comma and the words "for congressional review".

On line 10, delete "provided for" and insert "has certified that tolls will produce not less than \$1.3 billion for project construction, exclusive of collection, interest and other costs;"

Delete line 11.

On line 14, delete "or otherwise obligated".

On line 16, delete "initial phase of the".

On line 17, delete "borrowings" and insert "the State of Oregon".