

I won't be able to attend but would like to comment and hope you'll consider my views in any vote for funding.

The bridge, as currently conceived, is a model project -- the model of the too big to manage, all things to all constituencies, guaranteed to go over budget, mega project.

I'm not against replacing the bridge(s). I'm not against spending money to address the problems that the current plan says it'll solve. I'm not against big construction projects.

But, I'm bothered that for every problem that the new CRC claims to solve, there appear to be incremental solutions that are cheaper, faster, and easier to manage.

Consider just a few.

Delays caused by bridge lifts - Most of these can be eliminated by re-aligning the high point of the downstream rail bridge so that traffic can make a "straight shot" through both bridges.

Seismic vulnerability in the current auto bridges - This can be addressed right now by a seismic retrofit program to the current bridges (yes it may not achieve quite the levels that a new-build bridge will have but it's 10-20% of the cost of a new-build bridge and presumably can be done a lot sooner)

Traffic delays for commuters - From what I understand, that even if built, peak-travel-time commuter delays are unlikely to change by more than a few minutes and as frequently noted we'll replace a backup near the bridge with another one near the Rose Quarter . I can't claim that there's a cheaper alternative here only that the vast expense for the bridge doesn't purchase much delay reduction.

I'd rather see a series of small projects that each address a specific problem or small set of issues, and build constituencies for funding and approval around those issues.

For example

If we want to reduce delays to due to bridge lifts, let's put a toll on the current bridge and use it re-align (and stabilize) the downstream rail bridge. It'll be quicker to do and the people who benefit will have a hand in meeting the cost.

If we want to improve access to Hayden Island, let's build one or two conventional bridges to Hayden Island and not create a complicated tangle of on-ramps, off-ramps, and merging lanes 100 feet up in the air at one end of the CRC. (We also avoid demolishing a big chunk of Hayden Island's current core.) It may be something that Portland has to pay for itself but Hayden Island is part of Portland and it's a good thing if the beneficiaries mostly overlap with the funders. As a bonus the bridges will be bog-standard highway bridges, cheap and low-risk, fully within the abilities of local contractors and not cutting-edge engineering.

If we want a high-capacity transit connection to Vancouver, let's build a separate transit bridge. That sounds like it's a big expense and it's certainly not a small one but without the need to re-engineer miles of I-5 on-ramps and off-ramps on both sides of the river it's likely an order of magnitude cheaper than the CRC. Being further down the river, it could be the landmark bridge that many wanted the CRC to be (but couldn't because of Pearson/cost/DOTs) and reflect Oregon's values and its aspirations for the 21st century. (Failing that, it's probably good for 20 years of Bridge to Nowhere jokes.) If built, it would provide a backup to the current bridges and given that it would be built for buses and light-rail it could easily handle emergency vehicles, supply convoys, etc.

To summarize, the current CRC puts all of our eggs into one project. The result is a compromise that no one (except for consultants) whole-heartedly supports and which is such a large project that it's unlikely to meet its budget or schedule. It's going to be Big Dig Part II.

A series of smaller (though certainly visible) projects could address the same issues but maintain tighter coupling to interested constituencies, be easier to fund, and be much more more likely to succeed on-time and on-budget.

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