

February 11, 2014

To: House Speaker Tina Kotek
Members of the House Committee on Transportation and Economic Development

I am writing to you on behalf of the East Columbia Neighborhood which is located in the impact area of the CRC project. We support the CRC project and have worked for over 10 years with our neighbors, CC staff and elected officials to move the project forward.

East Columbia is a diverse neighborhood whose borders are I-5 on the west and the Columbia River on the north, NE 33rd on the east and Columbia Blvd on the south. Our neighborhood is zoned 60% industrial, 30% residential and 10% mixed use. We live with the congestion traffic of I-5 on a daily basis. The gridlock affects our daily lives and livability. We suffer from traffic delays, congestion and the related health impacts of emissions and noise. Daily backups cause traffic to divert through our neighborhood. We know every short cut through area surface streets. We believe the bridge project will not only improve traffic flow for freight and commuters, it will create a local connection for us to travel safely to and from our homes.

We have grown tired of the drawn out process of political discussions about the bridge. To us it is not political, it is personal, and it affects our daily lives each and every day. We hope you will step beyond political rhetoric to consider the lives of those people living with the negative impacts of gridlock and poor highway access, and take action to move the CRC project forward.

We know your current considerations will encompass complicated financial and risk factors but we urge you to consider the very real, personal impacts this bridge project has on the daily lives of people living in the impact area. There have been a variety of predictions of traffic pattern changes, effects of tolls, and viability of light rail. We have heard many conflicting reports over the years. One fact that has not changed, or that cannot be disputed, is the current traffic I-5 congestion negatively impacts the health and livability of the residents living in proximity to the bridge. Every weekday I-5 north bound is backed up and congested starting at 3pm causing us to schedule our lives around the traffic. We know every short cut on surface streets to avoid the I-5 congestion, creating another traffic problem. We have to schedule appointments and service calls around the I-5 north bound congested times. We know there are higher levels of toxins due to idling cars on I-5, and that businesses in our neighborhood suffer because access is difficult during the weekday north bound peak travel times. We don't consider I-5 to be an option to get home on weekday afternoons. We don't go north after 3pm.

You represent communities impacted in a variety of ways related to freight transit and traffic. Whether you are from a coastal community, Eastern Oregon, the Metro area, or the mid-Willamette Valley, this bridge will touch your life in some way. It touches our lives every single day. There has been very little focus on the impacts to the lives of those residents who live near the bridge. In your deliberations we urge you to consider the personal burdens that impact us on a daily basis.

We know many individuals and groups will urge you to consider putting forward a bill for reasons of creating jobs, of the benefit of efficient freight mobility resulting in economic gains, and for the safety issues of a bridge in need of repairs - we support those efforts, but we encourage you to equally consider your constituents who are negatively impacted on a daily basis and whose lives would be improved if a new bridge was constructed.

In testimony in February 2013 before a joint committee on the bridge, I used this quote in closing. It is all the more appropriate now, one year later:

"There are risks and costs to a program of action, but they are far less than the long-range risks and costs of comfortable inaction." John F. Kennedy

Thank you for your consideration,

Maryhelen Kincaid
Chair, East Columbia Neighborhood