

February 12, 2014

Dear House Transportation and Economic Development Committee,

Please do not include language referencing the Columbia River Crossing in HB4113. I am a retired architect and transportation planner and have been following this project since its inception in January 2004. I sincerely believe the only way to address the I-5 Freeway problems at the Columbia River is to reject the current proposal and start over with a new project team.

Contrary to what you have been told by the current project team, another option can meet the Purpose and Needs of the CRC and be completed years earlier with far fewer traffic impacts than the current proposal. It also would cost less than one billion dollars and, jointly funding with Washington, be financed without tolls. It is the *Common Sense Alternative II*. It includes:

- building an 8-lane freeway bridge with a bascule draw span;
- modifying the Railroad Bridge with a lift span south of the existing swing span;
- retaining the existing I-5 Bridges for local traffic, transit, bikes and pedestrians;
- building a local bridge across Portland Harbor for local traffic, MAX and bikes;
- extending the Yellow MAX Line to either Hayden Island or downtown Vancouver.

One of reasons the current project is so expensive is because the height of the bridge requires the interchanges at each end to be extremely high, complex, costly and ugly. These interchanges could be eliminated or vastly simplified if the I-5 Bridge were built low and immediately upstream of the existing bridges. This then keeps the freeway under the railroad allowing the SR-14 interchange to remain as it is today. The northbound off-ramp to SR-14 would be moved but the Vancouver National Historic Reserve would not be impacted.

The bridge could be straight, single deck, with eight traffic lanes, but with no bikes, pedestrians or light rail. It could have a long 72 foot high fixed span aligned with the hump of the existing bridges and a double leaf bascule draw-span aligned with the existing lift-spans posing no height limitation to shipping. A bascule bridge opens and closes faster than the old lift spans and the number of openings could be reduced by about 90% if the previously approved modification is made to the downstream railroad bridge. Dynamic speed controls on the freeway approaches to the bridge would further reduce congestion when the bridge is occasionally opened.

Instead of a massive interchange on Hayden Island, local traffic to and from Vancouver would cross the river on the existing Interstate southbound bridge. The existing bridges could be repurposed for local traffic, MAX, buses, bikes and pedestrians.

Most of the cost of the light rail project can be eliminated if it terminated downtown at 4th and Columbia Streets at an efficiently designed bus transfer station. This configuration would attract more transit riders and eliminate the expense and traffic impacts that will be caused by building huge park and ride garages in downtown Vancouver. BRT could be an added local element, but merely rationalizing bus routes and improving frequencies can achieve higher ridership with lower capital costs. If our northern neighbors don't want light rail, C-Tran buses can cross the river on the local bridges and connect with MAX on Hayden Island.

Freight congestion at the Marine Drive Interchange would be reduced because two of the causes for the bottleneck at this location would be gone. Hayden Island would be accessed by other than the interstate freeway and the new local access to Vancouver would allow the traffic clogging northbound ramp from Hayden Island to be eliminated.

Additional savings would be achieved by postponing or completely eliminating all of the CRC freeway expansion projects north and south of the river crossing since the aggressive traffic growth projected in 2005 to justify these projects has actually declined.

Attached: Illustrations of components of the *Common Sense Alternative II*.

Thank you,

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