



Written Testimony on the Columbia River Crossing I-5 Bridge Replacement Project
Submitted by Martin Callery, Chief Commercial Officer, on behalf of the
Oregon International Port of Coos Bay
Submitted to the
House Committee on Transportation and Economic Development
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Chair Read, Co-chairs Bentz and Gorsek, and members of the Committee, I am Martin Callery, Chief Commercial Officer of the Oregon International Port of Coos Bay. I appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony to this committee in support of the Columbia River Crossing I-5 Bridge project.

As a long-time Port of Coos Bay representative, I have the privilege of serving on the Oregon Freight Advisory Committee (OFAC), the Southwest Area Commission on Transportation (SWACT), the Lane Area Commission on Transportation (LaneACT), and the Oregon Rail Users League (ORULE). Additionally, I am actively involved in several other transportation and trade advocacy groups throughout Oregon and the northwest.

While the Columbia River Crossing is geographically separated from southern and southwestern Oregon by several hundred miles, it is as critically important to these regions as any of our state highways, because it is a vital component of the Interstate 5 trade corridor linking the western U.S. to domestic markets across the continent, as well as international markets in Canada and Mexico. Quite simply, I-5 provides for the timely and competitive movement of goods to markets north, south, east and internationally.

You have heard time after time that Oregon is a trade-dependent state, and this is especially true in rural Oregon. And even though portions of southern and southwestern Oregon have freight rail service, and the Port of Coos Bay provides some international and domestic marine shipping access, the majority of freight movements throughout the region are by truck, which use the state and federal highway system. And even as the Port of Coos Bay is working to increase utilization of both rail and marine modes, the Interstate 5 corridor, from Mexico to Canada, will remain an essential link in the multimodal system that benefits shippers in southern Oregon and statewide.

Agricultural commodities such as cranberries, milk, cheese, organic food products, and animal feed, seafood products including salmon, tuna, Dungeness crab and other shellfish, manufactured forest products, high value mineral commodities, electronic machine tool controllers, high-quality marine vessel components, and even consumer products such as flowers and bulbs, books and very soon Oregon-distilled rum – all produced in or distributed from southern and southwestern Oregon – move north to Washington, Canada and connections with other transportation modes in Portland and the Puget Sound region.

But looming ever larger as a monumental threat to this critical goods' movement corridor is the age and deteriorated condition of the failing structures that make up the existing I-5 Columbia River bridge. With ongoing component failures delaying traffic on I-5, what was once a beneficial component of the Northwest's transportation system is now an ever increasing bottleneck to the efficient flow of goods and people, eroding the competitiveness of Oregon businesses and limiting well-paying job opportunities for Oregonians.

The two existing structures were built in 1917 and 1958 respectively, and have long outlasted their cost-effective, useful service life. Various solutions have been proposed, but it is clear there's simply no financially feasible method of extending the existing bridges' lifespan or capacity. Bridge components continue to fail and repairs take longer, cost more, and increase highway congestion throughout the Portland/Vancouver area and the I-5 and I-205 corridors when any bridge portion is out of service. Add to that the fact that the bridges are seismically deficient and you have a disaster waiting to happen. And given the age of the structures it probably wouldn't take much of a seismic event to put the bridges in the water, impacting not only the highway, but the Columbia River also.

As Oregon and the Pacific Northwest continue to experience an upswing in economic activity across the nation and see incremental benefits from the increased activity, trucks continue to be critical to the U.S. economy, accounting for 67 percent of the movement of national freight tonnage, in what is estimated to be a \$600 billion industry. Additionally qualified drivers can and do earn high wages in an industry needing more than 100,000 new drivers each year.

During my time serving on the Oregon Freight Advisory Committee and other transportation advocacy groups, I have seen OFAC and the others generate many letters of support for the I-5 bridge project, and provide comments pertinent to the physical infrastructure and various components of the project. However, it is really past time for additional letters, comments and discussions.

The Columbia River Crossing I-5 /bridge must move forward now, so that the Portland/Vancouver metropolitan region, the Columbia/Snake River trade corridor and State of Oregon are prepared to accommodate and benefit from increases in domestic and international trade. It should also be noted that all jobs created for the Columbia River Crossing will be an incremental factor in the ongoing recovery of the Northwest economy, and will eventually result in an upturn of economic opportunity throughout Oregon . . . if we move the project forward now, not later, and especially not in 20 years.

You have heard or will hear from others about the local issues resulting from increased use of the Interstate 5 corridor between Oregon and Washington; roadway congestion, increasing travel delays, rising transportation costs and environmental impacts. Without immediate action to move the Columbia River Crossing project forward, the impacts from these local issues are just going to get worse, and the solutions are all going to cost more.

The State of Oregon has made commitments to improving livability and quality of life for all of us, and much of the focus of the proposed efforts involve reducing environmental impacts from transportation. The longer the Columbia River Crossing project is delayed, the more difficult it will be for Oregon to achieve meaningful reductions in green-house gas emissions and reductions in fuel consumption for the region.

On behalf of shippers in southwest Oregon and many others potentially impacted by the failing Columbia River Crossing I-5 Bridge, I urge this committee and Oregon's leadership to move forward and make a new CRC bridge a reality, and I urge Oregon to reach out to the State of Washington, both the state's leadership and their legislature, and bring them back to the project as full partners.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the importance of moving forward with the I-5 Columbia River Crossing, and thanks to the committee members for focusing on this increasingly important component of the multimodal transportation system serving Oregon and the Pacific coast.

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