

COMMENTS SUBMITTED TO BI-STATE BRIDGE COMMITTEE
October 25, 2019

Thank you for the opportunity to submit comments regarding the replacement of the I-5 Interstate Bridge. I would like to propose a plan I believe could potentially provide the greatest benefit to corridor users at the lowest cost. I hope you will agree my proposal is worth studying, and include it among the project alternatives considered.

I propose that the project include two elements:

- A new Interstate Bridge with a minimum of 10 lanes, as proposed in the previous Columbia River Crossing (CRC) project, and
- Adding one lane in each direction of I-5 between downtown Portland and the Interstate Bridge, for use by C-Tran to provide bus rapid transit (BRT) service. The lane could also be open to other users, such as high-occupancy vehicles or toll payers; however, such usage would be regulated to ensure free-flow conditions for transit vehicles at all times.

I believe this plan would provide the following benefits:

- Superior service for transit users, resulting in additional transit users. Transit service under my plan would provide vastly quicker travel times than would an extension of MAX service into Clark County. Currently, the MAX Yellow Line takes 25 minutes to travel the approximately 6 miles between the Delta Park and Union Station stations, at an average speed of about 15 m.p.h. Per Google Maps, a driver could complete the same trip in one-third the time (8 minutes), using I-5. Providing additional restricted lanes on I-5 would ensure C-Tran could maintain consistently fast travel times at freeway speeds. Regrettably, C-Tran's existing express bus service is plagued by unreliable travel times due to the severe congestion in the corridor.
- Besides being quicker, a bus-based system would allow service on multiple routes, originating in different locations, providing no-transfer service to many more commuters, which would also encourage additional transit riders. C-Tran already operates express bus service on multiple routes, utilizing park-and-ride lots located throughout the county.
- Reduced congestion would provide environmental benefits. More transit riders means fewer cars in the corridor, resulting in lower emissions of pollutants and greenhouse gases. Furthermore, making the additional lanes available to non-transit users reduces congestion in the general-purpose lanes. Besides improving travel times, this would also reduce emissions (vehicles emit much more pollution at speeds below 25 m.p.h. than at higher speeds).

- Greater acceptance by Southwest Washington residents. For various reasons, local resistance doomed the CRC project. Clearly, there exists much reluctance in Clark County to allowing Tri-Met to expand MAX service into the county. Allowing C-Tran to operate the transit service would avoid this roadblock.
- Additionally, project costs could potentially be significantly less than the CRC's, minimizing the financial impact on Southwest Washington residents (through either taxes or tolls). These costs were another major factor dooming the CRC. It should be noted that the Interstate Bridge itself, while providing the bulk of benefits of the CRC, accounted for only about one-third of the project's costs (the rest attributable to light rail and freeway and interchange improvements). While I cannot estimate the cost of adding lanes to I-5, I believe it worthwhile to assess what they would be.
- Furthermore, the additional lanes could be operated as toll lanes for non-transit users, generating toll revenue and reducing the financial burden on others. Such lanes successfully operate in many U.S. cities, using variable toll rates to maintain free-flow conditions.

Thank you for your consideration of my comments.

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