



July 21st, 2022

Bi-State Legislative Committee on the Interstate Bridge

Interstate Bridge Replacement Program

Dear Members of the Bi-State Legislative Committee on the Interstate Bridge:

The Washington County Chamber of Commerce is a business organization comprised of more than 820-member business throughout the region, employing over 75,000 people. The Washington County Chamber has a robust public policy division that advocates on many different business issues, including regional transportation.

Back in May, the Interstate Bridge Replacement (IBR) team released new details on the status of the I-5 bridge when they unveiled the plans for the new Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA). The LPA detailed an I-5 bridge that would maintain 6 lanes with an additional auxiliary lane in each direction, an interchange on Hayden Island, and light rail expansion.

Currently, our century old bridge faces both safety and congestion related issues. It is not a question of if, but whether a question of when a serious earthquake could cause the collapse of the bridge. Time is of the essence, so it is imperative that we build a new bridge that will provide peace of mind that a critical part of our transportation grid is secure.

However, building a safer bridge with similar capacity only solves half of the problem. The existing bridge serves 140,000 vehicles daily, resulting in heavy traffic for at least 7, but up to 10 hours a day. By 2040, the number of crossings is predicted to climb as high as 175,000 vehicle trips daily, or a 125 percent increase, due to the growing population of our region. The effects of congestion are felt in numerous ways, an increase in GHG emissions from idling vehicles, it reduces free time for commuters, and increases financial costs associated with the delayed delivery of goods.

At this point, the proposed solution for congestion offered by the IBR appears to be a bridge with improved bicycle, pedestrian, and transit options. While this multi-modal approach is important and provides commuters additional options, it is our opinion this will only result in minor relief for our congestion problems. These options are a viable solution for those who are taking short commutes from state to state but will not help commuters traveling beyond downtown Portland, or the freight trucks caring vital and time sensitive goods across the region or beyond.

With the growing population in our region, a decline of ridership in public transit, and a higher than ever demand for vehicles, we must plan better. A replacement bridge will cost more than \$4 billion, and it is important that leaders in our region prioritize constructing a bridge to accommodate demand. As this process moves forward, we must build a bridge that adds capacity, as this will be the key to reducing the congestion. This proven method of reducing congestion will help all commuters and freight get to where they need to be more efficiently. This will provide commuters and businesses that utilize this bridge every day and will result in less idling which will help us toward our climate goals.

Thank you for considering this critically important request.