

July 28, 2023

Dear members of the Joint Oregon-Washington Legislative Action Committee:

In response to today's meeting regarding replacement of the I-5 bridge, I wish to submit these comments. My name is Dr. Joseph Stenger. I am a grandfather and a retired physician who lives in NE Portland.

The current bridge spans need replacement. One of them is over 100 years old. It is possible that a replacement crossing could last another century, so it needs to be built with attention to the likely changes in society. As we hear daily, we are living in a rapidly changing world, one with insufferably high temperatures, dangerous flooding and drought, and drastic loss of species. Any major expenditure of public money needs to be done with a primary emphasis on how this will contribute to or prevent worsening of greenhouse gas poisoning of our atmosphere.

We are also in a crisis of road deaths. As someone who uses a bicycle as my primary mode of transportation, I feel the danger on our roads daily. It does not make sense to invest huge sums in widening the I-5 highway knowing that induced demand will mean increased traffic with resulting higher tailpipe emissions and worsened air pollution for the surrounding communities. It does not make sense to invest huge sums in this project when that will preclude investments in local roads that would reduce traffic deaths.

*We need a replacement for the current spans that will withstand a major earthquake, that will prioritize transit, that will facilitate use of active modes of transportation, and that will not worsen health damage to nearby communities.* We need to constrain the dimensions of the project to those specific goals. This must be a more modest project to fit the need, rather than a 5-mile-long widening with reconstruction of multiple interchanges. As leaders, we need you to make decisions that will produce a healthier society, not replicate prior errors with highway projects that have contributed so much to our current climate crisis and to damage to the health of impacted neighborhoods.

Congestion pricing is an effective tool to limit VMT. We should begin this now so that we can see the true effect on traffic levels. An investment grade analysis, ie Level 3, must be completed before the 2025 OR legislative session when we expect to see a major transportation package debated, so that we have actual data on which to rely.

I urge you to minimize the width of the project. Three lanes each direction, plus a shoulder, plus an auxiliary lane is already overly generous without adding a second auxiliary lane.

We need to maximize use of transit across this crossing. We know that the majority of trips across the current bridge are from Vancouver WA-area commuters. If a substantial portion of those can be switched from private autos to transit, the benefits of more-rapid travel for drivers and of improved pollution will be dramatic. Making transit attractive should be a major focus of this project – perhaps even making it cost-free. If transit is rapid, frequent, accessible, comfortable, reliable and inexpensive while single-occupancy-car travel is more costly, the need for a major highway expansion will be much less and the overall cost of the project will be much less.

I have attended many meetings of the IBR Program but have not heard a detailed discussion regarding the decision to dismiss an immersed tube tunnel as an option. Since there are multiple cogent

arguments in favor of such a choice, I encourage the Committee to request a full explanation of that decision.

We trust you to guide this project into the direction that will do the most good for the people of our two states at the lowest cost.

Thank you for reading this letter and for all your dedicated efforts on this project.

Sincerely,

Joseph Stenger MD