

Having followed and testified in the effort to create a new I-5 crossing over the Columbia River for more than a decade, I am convinced ODOT is again heading toward an embarrassing failure. Some of that failure can be attributed to an understandable, but poorly directed, desire to address a serious problem as quickly as possible.

June 7, 2006, Memorandum from CRC Engineering Team:

In the process of developing the River Crossing (RC) components and packaging them with the Roadway components, it has become apparent that those RC components that include a low-level moveable span should be removed from further consideration and not be included in alternative packaging ... Movable spans are more costly in both initial and maintenance and operations when compared to a fixed span.”

This erroneous decision resulted in ODOT pursuing a costly, seemingly endless, almost comical (and impossible) effort to design a bridge high enough to comply with federal waterway navigation law, and an amazing series of gymnastic attempts to avoid conflict with aircraft approaching and departing the Pearson airfield.

When meeting with District 13 US Coast Guard in Seattle more than a decade ago, it was clear that a fixed bridge design could *never* comply with federal waterway navigation law.

Once the June 7, 2006 decision was made, it was somewhat understandable why ODOT pushed forward – striving to “protect” the costly investments made in their original plans for a high bridge. Like the “gymnastics” designed to avoid conflict with aircraft, it was almost comical how ODOT attempted to sell their ill-designed project to the public by claiming that “seismic vulnerability” necessitated approval as they elevated not only the bridge, but also I-5 and freeway interchanges to seismically vulnerable heights.

After discarding a moveable span in 2006, ODOT has offered the ludicrous idea of adding a moveable span to a *high-bridge* option to comply with federal waterway navigation law. Lowering the bridge, interchanges and I-5 substantially **lowers costs, expedites construction, and reduces adverse environmental impacts and seismic vulnerability**. The low bridge option, rejected in 2006, would cost a fraction of the current ODOT proposal.

The Legislature needs to instruct ODOT to request **outside consultants**, un beholden to ODOT, to give honest consideration to (1) a low bridge option with a moveable span, (2) an immersed tunnel option, and (3) improvements to the existing BNSF railway bridge. Such evaluation needs to consider the how meaningful public transit alternatives and tolling would impact post pandemic, 21st century traffic.

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