

Paul Edgar

From: Paul Edgar [pauloedgar@qwest.net]
Sent: Tuesday, March 21, 2006 9:53 AM
To: Henry Hewitt; Harold A. Dengerink, Ph.D.; Rob DeGraff
Cc: Rep. Deb Wallace; Rex Burkholder; Sam Adams; Marc Boldt
Subject: I am going to speak to this at tomorrows CRC Task Force Meeting (Please print this and have it in the packets for the members)

Paul,

Thank you for your efforts to bring a regional perspective and a sense of accountability to the congestion problems in the Portland area. I agree with nearly everything you are trying to accomplish and I appreciate your efforts to "keep the pressure" on the leaders of the Region. In my opinion, we are on the same side...and we want the same things for Portland / Vancouver. If we differ at all, it's in the matters of scope and timing. Let me explain:

Scope: I think our goal should be, not to fix one corridor between Portland and Vancouver, but to fix them all. I don't want to just widen I-205, or build a new Columbia River Crossing at I-5 or to build a new third bridge connecting the Ports and better serving the western communities...I want all three, and, looking to the twenty year future, the metropolitan area will need all three. So what we are trying to do is to pursue a strategy that will give us the best chance of getting all three.

Timing: The question is...How to do this, and in what order??? Should we try for the easier (and less expensive) widening of I-205 first? Maybe, but if so, that might reduce the perceived need for an improved I-5 corridor? Should we try for the third bridge first to improve the connection between the Ports with a new "freight" corridor? Maybe, but that might be seen as a substitute for widening I-205 and for improving the I-5 corridor.

So, what we seem to be settling on is trying to get the most difficult project (the I-5 corridor) underway first. If we can get that project started (and funded) and prove to the public and the legislature our ability to make a positive difference at the I-5 crossing...then, it is not such a great leap to build public support for the other two, and ...there is no question that both other projects can still stand on their own as necessary and cost effective. The fear is, if we do I-205 or the third bridge between the Ports first, than these projects will be used by some as an excuse to not support the I-5 improvements and we will further delay the replacement of these critical bridges.

I hope that you can accept (or at least not object to) this strategy. In fact, my real hope is that you will use your considerable influence to support and help us find a way to build all three of these needed projects.

Thank you again for your active support of improved transportation in the Portland / Vancouver area.

David O. Cox
Division Administrator
FHWA - Oregon Division
503-399-5749

19 October, 2006

Patrick Singleton
2928 NE 12th Ave
Portland, OR 97212
igorL85@comcast.net

TO: Columbia River Crossing Task Force

SUBJECT: Selection of Supplemental Bridge Alternatives and Reuse of Existing Bridges

As a concerned citizen and historic roads advocate, I urge you to strongly consider alternatives that allow for the continued use or reuse of the existing historic bridges (Alternatives 3 – 7). I understand that changes must be made to address growing congestion and the need for increased mobility, and that there are challenges to the continued use of the existing bridges. However, these bridges (particularly the northbound 1917 structure) are vitally important to the community and nation as historic landmarks, and can be successfully integrated into a regional transportation system along with a supplemental bridge. Reusing the existing Interstate Bridge in some capacity would be a prudent and fitting decision that maintains the historic integrity of the bridges for future generations to enjoy and experience. I strongly urge you to preserve these important historic bridges.

Ninety years ago this February, the Interstate Bridge was opened for traffic, and for 65 years remained the only local Columbia River crossing. As a vital part of the Pacific Highway and later US Highway 99 (predecessors to Interstate 5), the bridge has played an important role in the development of the Portland-Vancouver region, the states of Oregon, Washington, and California, and the entire nation's highway system. One of the biggest bridges in the country when first built, the Interstate Bridge is the largest and most visible cultural resource that remains of Highway 99 and the Pacific Highway, and this significance is evidenced by its listing on the National Register of Historic Places.

Tearing down this important historic resource would be a significant setback to the historic roads movement and the preservation of historic resources important in the development of our nation's transportation system. Physical objects of our past are being lost daily, and it is a continued struggle to retain important places and structures, particularly along Historic Highway 99. Historic resources, such as the existing Interstate Bridge, convey a sense of time, a sense of place, a sense of respect. They are tangible links to the past that stimulate and encourage us to view the world in new and useful ways. In this regard, the bridges could be utilized as an anchor to promote the growing industry of heritage tourism for downtown Vancouver and the surrounding region. The existing bridges can continue to function successfully as both historic and transportation resources.

I will leave you with a quote that may be found inscribed on a plaque at one end of the Interstate Bridge. I urge you not only to heed these words as they pertain to the current crossing discussion, but also to please remember and do not discard the energies and hard work put in by those who created these important historic bridges.

"Therefore when we build, let us think that we build forever. Let it not be for the present delight, nor for present use alone. Let it be such work as our descendents will thank us for. And let us think, as we lay stone on stone, that a time is to come when those stones will be held sacred because our hands have touched them, and that men will say as they look upon the labor and wrought substance of them, 'See: this our fathers did for us.'" — John Ruskin.

Thank you for your time,

Patrick Singleton

Councilor Robert Liberty

600 NORTHEAST GRAND AVENUE | PORTLAND, OREGON 97232 2738
TEL 503 797 1552 | FAX 503 797 1793



METRO

TO: Rex Burkholder
FROM: Robert Liberty
DATE: October 2, 2006
RE: Comments on Columbia Crossing Alternatives
COPY: Councilors, Michael Jordan, Andy Cotugno

I have quickly reviewed the September 20, 2006 "Draft Memorandum: Considerations for Replacing Versus Reusing the Existing Interstate 5 Bridges" and "Preliminary Alternative Packages; Columbia River Crossing" dated 08/09/06 and "Final Problem Definition" dated December 27, 2005. Below are some questions and comments.

Observations about the Problem Definition

The problem is defined entirely in terms of vehicle movement (cars, trucks, bikes, pedestrians, transit) and safety.¹ The definition does not encompass the *sources* of the congestion (greater job growth south of the Columbia; more houses north of the Columbia) **nor does it articulate any broader purpose for the bridge improvements** (urban design, economic development, environmental or equity goals of some kind.) In other words, vehicle movement and related safety are stated as the ends, not the means.

The problem definition also does not indicate relative importance of the various objectives identified (e.g. safety versus speed, freight², transit, cars, barge traffic) nor does it indicate any limitations on the costs of possible solutions. Instead each of these objectives is treated as essential and as the grounds for eliminating some alternatives from consideration. Similarly, the project website gives the percentages of traffic in various categories, (local, regional, long distance, etc.) but does not indicate which of these movements is more or less important.

¹ See:

<http://www.columbiarivencrossing.org/materials/MeetingMaterials/010406%20CRC%20Problem%20Definition%20Final.pdf>

² Here is an illustration of the need for some quantification and priority setting regarding objectives. An April 2003 report by ODOT, Cambridge Systematics and David Evans, entitled *Regional Economic Effects of the I-5 Corridor/Columbia River Crossing Transportation Choke Points*, noted that without a new or upgraded bridge the value of congestion-caused delays for trucks on I-5 would increase by \$20 million per year. Assuming a 5.5% return on \$1.5 billion that would be invested in a new bridge, the opportunity cost of the new bridge is about \$83 million/year or four times the value of the increased truck congestion.

Finally, I note that the problem definition is presented in terms of the study area, which is a corridor along I-5 between 134th in Vancouver and the I-5/I-405 junction. The interrelationship with I-205, with I-5 through central Portland (and beyond) and with regional land development patterns are not discussed (in these documents at least.)

This narrow focus helps explain what I believe are some deficiencies in the range of alternatives considered.

Recommendation: Given our discussions about the importance of the purpose statement/problem definitions for other projects, it would be appropriate for the Council to offer a comment on the problem definition for this project.

Alternatives Packages:

The first thing that caught my eye is that the maps presented with the alternatives packages. They show only the area from Columbia Slough to about 45th in Vancouver; no alternatives discuss how changes or improvements outside this small area might address some of the issues related to congestion.

With respect to the structural alternatives, they all assume the construction of a new bridge; either a replacement bridge or a supplemental bridge.

There is no proposal that includes modifications to I-205.

There is no element in any alternative that proposes changes to the downstream rail bridge, even though the problem definition discusses the challenge for barges trying to make the swerve between the two openings. (See also section 4, "Navigation Considerations" in the Replacement versus Re-use memo.) One way to address that particular problem is to remodel or rebuild the I-5 bridge, the other is to modify the rail bridge.

The non-structural alternative (or supplement) is described as "Transportation System Management/Transportation Demand Management Focus". All that is provided under the section devoted to "Transportation System/Transportation Demand Management" in this alternative are the words "Aggressive level." What falls under this heading and at what level of cost? Does it include tolling on I-5 and I-205? Does it include employee trip options? ITS elements? Does it include accident and incident responses?

It does not appear to include any change in land use designations or plans. Possible changes to land use patterns deserves its own alternative but as far as I can tell it is not considered at all.

Finally, there is something unreal about presenting these alternatives without even a preliminary discussion of cost/benefit ratios, without any consideration of induced demand or land use impacts, without any acknowledgement of financial constraints and without any indication of the relative importance of different trip movements.

Comments on Draft Memo on Considerations for Replacement Versus Reuse of Existing I-5 Bridges

The memo outlines many important issues but suffers from some serious limits as a basis for making a decision. These limitations include:

- The memo lists “costs” as a “key issue” but does not actually provide any cost information on the various replacement versus re-use options. (At page 11 the memo notes that cost estimates will be available in November³; however all of these costs are hard construction and demolition costs.) Instead it offers *opinions* about costs. For example on page 3, the memo states: “Upgrading the existing bridges to reduce vertical grades and provide sufficient shoulder widths is not prudent because it is too expensive. Reducing the vertical grades would require significant modifications to piers and reconstruction of selected truss spans. Though technically feasible, this would be prohibitively expensive and would impact river navigation by lowering vertical clearance under the high span channel.” (Note: There is no discussion of raising the length bridges in order to reduce vertical grades while increasing barge clearance.)

Under section 3.5 it references the conclusion of a seismic panel which met for a two-day workshop⁴: “The panel determined that it is technically feasible to retrofit the existing bridges to a level of service that would meet “no collapse” criteria, though the expense could be equal to a substantial portion of the cost of a new structure.” What does “substantial portion” of the cost mean – 30%, 50%, 90%? The analysis also assumes a design for the improvements (and no changes to the railroad bridge) such that barges will still have to weave between the two bridges.

Given the potential for a new bridge to cost \$1 to \$2 billion, it would be interesting to know how upgrading an existing bridge could be more expensive than building a new one.

- The memo offers conclusions that rule out re-use but does not provide the facts or analysis that support that conclusion. For example, the memo states: “Given their through-truss design, it is not prudent to widen the existing structures to meet current interstate highway design standards. Therefore, alternatives that keep interstate traffic on the existing bridge would not meet the project’s purpose and need.” Why isn’t it prudent?
- The memo treats meeting *all* of the current highways design standards as the sine qua non for any alternative, regardless of cost, or of cost relative to benefit. But why isn’t a cost-effective *improvement* in the current design a valid alternative, even if it means the entire project does not meet all of current standards? Is this a standard we have applied to other projects? Just changing this assumption could dramatically change the conclusions in the

³ More to the point, it is interesting that we have some kind of cost estimate for the overall project (\$1 to \$2 billion) without having had any formal cost estimates at all.

⁴ Is a two-day workshop on seismic safety sufficient basis for ruling out alternatives that might save hundreds of millions of dollars? Given the budget for this study it would seem a much more extensive study is justified.

memo. And what about nonstructural ways to increase safety, such as by reducing the speed limit?

- More importantly, there are no comparisons of the differences in costs and benefits between the re-use and replacement options.
- The memo puts great emphasis on how an arterial crossing would “likely substantially increase through-traffic in downtown Vancouver and on Hayden Island.... Motorists taking longer trips may divert to an arterial crossing...” increasing traffic in downtown, causing arterial congestion and interfering with pedestrian movement etc. Later in the memo, this increased traffic is described as inconsistent with local plans. (Page 9) But I do not see any similar consideration about what induced traffic effects there might be up and down I-5 from a new, wider, bridge and whether those alternatives are consistent with local land use plans or state planning requirements.

Some Recommendations:

- Recommend that before deciding on alternatives, especially with respect to re-use or replacement, the Task Force decide on the relative importance of the different objectives they have identified including travel/access, barge movement and safety objectives. It will probably be necessary to identify the objectives and their relative importance by both mode and market. Community development objectives should be added.
- Before narrowing the alternatives, prepare some preliminary cost/benefit information for all the alternatives, including structural and nonstructural solutions, seismic retrofits and covering a bigger geographic area than in the current alternatives. “Costs” means more than construction and demolition costs. Any land use effects and construction caused delays should be factored into the costs part of the equation.
- Add a land use alternative.
- Consider structural and nonstructural solutions involving I-205, the rail bridge and areas further north and south of the current project area.