



# Portland Pedestrian Advisory Committee

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Portland OR 97204

## Members

June 24, 2008

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Columbia River Crossing Project  
c/o Heather Gundersen  
700 Washington Street, Suite 300  
Vancouver, WA 98660

Commissioner Sam Adams  
1221 SW Fourth Avenue, Room 220  
Portland, OR 97204

## Re: Interstate 5 Columbia River Crossing Project, DEIS

Dear Ms. Gundersen and Commissioner Adams:

This letter is the Pedestrian Advisory Committee of the City of Portland testimony to the Columbia River Crossing (CRC) Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) issued on May 2, 2008. We are submitting a number of suggestions that we believe will improve the project and look forward to your response.

### Introduction and Executive Summary of Recommendations

The Pedestrian Advisory Committee of the City of Portland (PAC) respects the considerable effort and accomplishment embodied in the CRC DEIS. The PAC *provisionally endorses the replacement bridge alternative* because it appears to provide the best framework for improving the pedestrian and cycling environment within the project study area. The endorsement is conditioned on the project team making extensive revisions as outlined in this letter.

The purpose of this testimony is to encourage the project steering committee – the CRC Task Force - to look beyond the economic and transportation engineering framework articulated in the “Project Purpose” section of Chapter 1. The bridge alternatives proposed fail to respond to a *larger vision and agenda for a more environmentally and economically sustainable future* - policies adopted by the states of Oregon and Washington, Metro, and the City of Portland, and policies that support walking scale communities.

In support of this project the PAC has identified a set of principles, suggested changes to the design, and anticipated outcomes that would fulfill the promise of the new bridge concept. The principles are as follows:

- 1. Check regional sprawl, commuter trip length, vehicle miles traveled (VMT), and global warming while enhancing freight movement and economic activity.**
- 2. Minimize traffic congestion and highway impacts on Portland's Central City and neighborhoods along the I-5 Corridor within the city.**

- 3. Enhance urban neighborhood and recreational land uses in the study area especially along riverfront areas and at interchanges.**
- 4. Create a landmark gateway bridge.**
- 5. Provide “world class” pedestrian and bike routes and environment to facilitate both commuter and recreational use.**

Changes to the Replacement Alternative flowing from these principals include:

- A world class 24-foot wide multi-use bike commuter and regional trail on the west side of the crossing and a 10-foot wide walking and cycling sidewalk on the east side that will serve commuting and recreational needs for the life of the structure.
- A lower level, urban, multimodal bridge connecting Hayden Island, neighborhoods to the south and to the freeway at a relocated Marine Drive interchange. This will replace freeway auxiliary lanes serving the island and eliminate the complex high capacity interchange that dominates the island. The bridge would include bike lanes and a 12-foot walkway on the east side.
- A maximum of 3 vehicle lanes plus one full width shoulder lane *total* in either direction over the river. This provides build out consistent with long term highway capacity to the south. Congestion pricing and lane designations to facilitate freight movement will be included.
- *Combined* light rail and busway crossing including three or four lanes/tracks to accommodate both modes and allow for passing.
- Interchanges that are carefully designed to enhance the adjacent land uses and maximize the network of pedestrian and bike access to nearby destinations.
- Commitment to sustainability and quality urban design and landscaping for all aspects of the project.

### **PAC DEIS Overview and Critique**

The stated *primary goal* of the project articulated in the “Project Purpose” section of Chapter 1 is to reduce congestion and enhance freight movement through the crossing. The project area is a 5 mile stretch of highway, highway interchanges, and “high capacity” transit improvements. Among the alternatives being considered, only one alternative is likely to be given serious study during the *Locally Preferred Alternative* assessment. That alternative includes a new span with 12 vehicle lanes plus full width shoulders (potentially 16 lanes total for later expansion) to replace the 6 lanes without shoulders now in service.

Sustainability elements include transit and improved bike and pedestrian access. Toll pricing enhances the economic viability and prolongs reduced congestion. While the lane count provides generous capacity for adding car and truck traffic, the project fails to offer a serious alternative to building a conventional high capacity freeway designed to temporarily reduce congestion and decrease travel time - a short term fix with legendary negative secondary effects.

Addressing the land use, transportation, and environment nexus, the DEIS speaks to “urban design” in several technical reports.

1. The “Land Use” technical report summarizes policies in and around the project area and provides a literature review of the impact of highways on development. The authors cite a number of studies that downplay the sprawl inducing influences of highway widening in other cities that *are sprawling*. Included is a summary of a Parsons Brinkerhoff 2001 study that concludes that land use policies may have more impact on what is constructed than highway widening and suggests that *increased capacity simply accentuates what is already occurring* (that would be *sprawl*). The technical report concludes that increasing vehicle capacity on the bridge is “*unlikely to induce sprawling land use patterns*”.

Remarkable in its absence is a discussion of the Vancouver, BC experience that strongly supports enhanced urban development, reduced sprawl, reduced congestion, and cleaner air by limiting highway and specifically bridge lane capacity. The “Land Use” technical report cites Metro goals to reduce VMT from 1991 levels (no discussion as to how this project meets those goals) and a 2005 report that identifies congestion as a threat to the economy of Portland (citing complaints by shippers). Congestion at the crossing is a serious problem but seems less so when considering congestion on I-5 through Seattle or Los Angeles.

2. The “Visual and Aesthetics” technical report is perfunctory description of the visibility of structures from a quantitative perspective - not the quality of or aspirations for the visual or tactile experience. This accurately reflects the lack of concern for aesthetic issues within the project team.
3. Environmental Technical Reports. Oregon and Washington have set aggressive goals to roll back greenhouse gas emissions to a percentage of 1990s levels. Environmental pollution is evaluated in the context of the study area only. The writers assume that noise will be reduced by new sound walls. They assume that tailpipe emissions will be reduced by cleaner burning engines. We recommend that this report incorporate the June 9, 2008 health assessment report from the Multnomah County Health Department.

## **Conclusion**

Quality of life issues for neighborhoods adjacent to the project or for the region as a whole are generally outside the boundary of evaluation. It should not be so. The DEIS fails to consider important environmental and urban design impacts within and adjacent to the project boundaries, and in the region as a whole. The PAC finds the urban design and environmental impact analysis and its conclusions insufficient to support the high speed 12 lane expansion favored by the project leadership. Our concern extends to the lack of emphasis on the quality of design evident in concepts developed for the bridge and interchanges. As a gateway to Oregon and a gateway to Portland, the 12 lane option with its sprawling Hayden Island interchange will represent a profound lack of imagination and vision – a monument to the age of the freeway as a pipeline for suburban sprawl.

Ms. Gundersen and Commissioner Adams

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**The PAC recommends that the CRC design team develop a replacement bridge alternative that supports state and regional transportation, environmental, and urban design policies in addition to facilitating freight movement. The argument for a fifth option outlined in the pages following contains our detailed recommendations for changes to the project and the beneficial outcomes we anticipate will result from those changes.**

We greatly appreciate the opportunity to comment on this important project.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'DAULWES', written in a cursive style.

Pedestrian Advisory Committee  
David Aulwes, Chair

Enclosure: Five Principles for the Fifth Alternative

Cc: John Gillam, PDOT Transportation Planning  
Rex Burkholder, Metro Council  
Portland City Council  
Portland Planning Commission  
Portland Design Commission

## **Five Principles for the Fifth Alternative**

### **1. Check regional sprawl, commuter trip length, vehicle miles traveled (VMT), and global warming while enhancing freight movement and economic activity.**

- Every evidence indicates that enhanced bridge capacity will encourage dispersed land use development especially on the north side of the river, encourage longer distance commuting, and will increase auto dependency.
- The availability of LRT/BRT, enhanced bicycle and pedestrian facilities, and tolls will likely encourage higher density growth on Hayden Island and in downtown Vancouver along with park and ride viability. But without lane capacity restraint it will have little to no effect on sprawling development patterns beyond.

#### **Suggested Changes:**

Provide HOV+ truck lane to access port facilities.

Encourage long distance freight to use I-205.

Reduce the number of lanes to a maximum of 4 lanes including shoulder lane.

Reduce Design Speed and enforce to 50 MPH.

Expand the capacity of light rail and bus to 3 or 4 lanes.

Use congestion as the primary means of regulating traffic flow with tolling providing additional support.

#### **Expected Outcomes:**

Enhance viability of downtown Vancouver as a pedestrian scale employment and residential center.

Stabilize traffic flow at near current levels and enhance viability of options to SOV travel.

Discourage sprawling auto dependent land use patterns and long distance commuting.

Conserve energy and reduce negative environmental and health effects.

Make more efficient use of land for housing and employment.

Reduced speed allows greater capacity, increases safety, reduces lane width, merge lane lengths, shoulder width, and reduce costs.

HOV + Freight lane will provide priority lane access to and from Port facilities.

### **2. Minimize traffic congestion and highway impacts on Portland's Central City and neighborhoods along the I-5 Corridor.**

- The regional Task Force narrowed the options for the location of the bridge replacement but there does not appear to have been an assessment of the long term management of the I-5 and I-205 corridors within the city to minimize the need to expand roadway capacity in the future and to mitigate the negative impacts of noise, pollution, health impacts, and damage to neighborhood connectivity.
- Designing a bridge to carry up to 6 to 8 lanes in each direction compared to 3 lanes today will greatly increase the speed and flow of traffic through Vancouver and into Portland - where it will stop or move to neighborhood streets. No long-term vision for the I-5 corridor in the city has been adopted. Will it remain the primary through route and will it be periodically widened to accommodate additional traffic? I-5 congestion at the juncture with I-405, I-84, in the area of the Rose Quarter, and

crossing of the Marquam Bridge will place additional pressure on the viability of these routes

- The additional traffic flowing south of the bridge will create additional traffic, noise, and air pollution in the Portland neighborhoods along the freeway and of course in the city of Vancouver. No mitigation has been discussed.
- The Bridge Replacement Alternative offers a choice between light rail and an exclusive busway. This should not be either-or. Light rail serves urban neighborhoods and high demand routes. Buses are efficient in serving outlying towns and residential areas and provide convenience and flexibility. The project should provide exclusive right of way to accommodate both modes.

**Suggested Changes:**

Expand the capacity of light rail and bus from 2 lanes/tracks to 3 or 4 lanes/tracks. Encourage long distance trucking and auto traffic onto I-205 to reduce traffic on I-5 traveling through the densest areas of the city. This can be achieved with the following combination of measures: congestion pricing, signage, speed limits, transit enhancements, education.

Reduce Design Speed and enforce to 50 MPH on the bridge.

Include traffic calming elements in the design.

Reduce the number of lanes to a maximum of 4 lanes including shoulder lanes.

Reduce lane widths to 11 feet and reduce shoulder width to 12.

**Expected Outcomes:**

I-5 will serve freight destined for Portland west of 82<sup>nd</sup> Avenue and Washington County.

Stabilize congestion at I-84 and I-405 intersections and Marquam Bridge.

Avoid increased highway noise and other highway environmental pollution.

Reduced construction and maintenance costs.

Reduce driver frustration and pressure to reconstruct highways at choke points south.

Minimize demand for capacity improvements.

**3. Enhance urban neighborhood and recreational land uses in the study area especially along riverfront areas and at interchanges.**

- The Columbia River south shore and Hayden Island are dominated by highway interchanges.
- Truck and car access to Hayden Island is via the shared high speed “auxiliary lanes”. Access to and from the Island and the connection to Bridgeton and other neighborhoods in the city including the houseboat communities along the slough is not improved.
- Bike, pedestrian and transit access between Vancouver and the neighborhoods northeast of the downtown and destinations to the east are not being adequately addressed by the project or the City of Vancouver. With one exception, the connections are all associated with I-5 interchanges, are widely spaced, and will become increasingly congested as more vehicles attempt to access the highway.

- Proposed interchanges discourage urban land use patterns and bike and pedestrian travel. This is particularly acute for travel parallel to I-5.

**Suggested Changes:**

Provide a lower level, urban, multimodal bridge connecting Hayden Island and neighborhoods to the south with a relocated Marine Drive interchange. This will replace freeway auxiliary lanes serving the island and eliminate the complex high capacity interchange that dominates the island. The bridge would include bike lanes and a 12 foot walkway.

Move Marine Drive interchange south and away from river and connect to the road serving Hayden Island.

Add Local Street along river to support mixed-use neighborhood relating to Hayden Island.

Add bike and pedestrian network connectivity in the area of all interchanges to minimize out of direction travel.

**Expected Outcomes:**

Improves east west connectivity and reduces noise and congestion on Hayden Island.

Eliminates need for auxiliary lanes.

Improves safety by limiting merge activity.

Enhances bike and pedestrian access to Island by minimizing height from ground to trail over Hayden Island (currently about 40 feet).

Eliminates long stairs and elevators on Hayden Island.

Improves safety and connectivity to local streets and arterials for Island residents.

Encourages walking and cycling through areas now considered too dangerous or too lengthy in the area of the freeways.

Encourages development of land uses that are pedestrian friendly, which saves development and maintenance costs.

Reduces dependency on the auto.

**4. Create landmark gateway bridge**

- The scenic values of the setting, and the *design aspirations* expressed in the *adopted goals* for the project and the urgency of environmental priorities are not described in the DEIS and do not appear in any design studies.
- Although the design is conceptual, every indication is that the view from the top of the bridge southbound will reveal a sea of concrete from Hayden Island to the south shore and through Delta Park - at rush hour a sea of stalled vehicles. This degrading Welcome to Oregon ill serves the states image as a leader in environmental quality.
- The 80 mph design speeds, lane widths, wide shoulders and interchange configurations represent an approach to designing highways in urban areas that is a dinosaur from the 1960s in the context of a densely urbanized land and the dramatic setting of the river and Columbia Slough crossings.

**Suggested Changes:**

Integrate aesthetics of structural and ornamental elements into the DEIS budget.

Prohibit value engineering of the design elements once adopted.

Employ "A" level landscape /urban design/bridge designer to lead the urban design and final design of the bridge.

Construct two separate and generally parallel spans from the Oregon Marine Drive interchange to the Washington SR-14 interchange.

Landscape around the roadway and bridgehead interchanges to the level of quality of the PDX airport approach road.

**Expected Outcomes:**

A bridge that is worthy of its setting, expressive of the passion that Oregon and Washington residents have for the environment and regarded as a great engineering and aesthetic achievement.

The quality of the experience of crossing the river in either direction will be timeless, distinctive, and highly memorable both in the design of the bridge and the interchanges. This applies to autos and trucks but equally for transit riders, cyclists, and pedestrians.

The visual quality of the bridge from the river and the river banks will be timeless, distinctive, and highly memorable and a regional attraction as an engineering and urban design achievement.

**5. Create “world class” pedestrian and bike routes and environment to facilitate both commuter and recreational use.**

- The programming effort for bike and pedestrian access has been productive. However the response from the design team began by asking us to seriously consider the cost of adding such facilities. Whereas highway lane and interchange design are well developed, other modes including transit, bikes and pedestrians have yet to gel as more than rough diagrams indicating intent and general criteria.

**Suggested Changes:**

Provide separate zones for pedestrians, casual cyclists, and commuter and touring lanes. This will require more space than the 16 foot right of way included in the DEIS options.

Provide quality pedestrian paths on both sides of the bridge structures.

Coordinate multiuse trail with transit right of way over the river.

The PAC endorses the CRC Bike Pedestrian Advisory recommendations for a 24 foot trail on the west side of the bridge and recommends a 10 foot - primarily pedestrian walkway - on the east side.

**Expected Outcomes:**

Higher than projected use by pedestrians for commuting to work in the Hayden Island to Vancouver downtown corridor.

Higher than projected use by commuter and recreational cyclists.

Regional recreation destination.

Reduced environmental impacts from motorized travel.

Health benefits associated with use of the facility.

**In addition to the 5 principles we suggest changes that would reduce costs without compromising safety**

- Wide shoulders and auxiliary lanes are described as safety features. One of the reasons that shoulders are required on both sides is the number of lanes and the speeds. One of the common uses of shoulders is for future lane expansion – especially

the center shoulder. Reducing the number of lanes and shoulders will result in significant cost to build and maintain savings.

- Lane widths are related to vehicle size and speed. By reducing speeds it is possible to reduce lane width and cost to build and resurface.
- Vehicle speed in an urban freeway setting has numerous indirect and direct costs. To merge safely the merge and exit lanes must be longer. These long merge lanes cost money to construct and maintain and remove land for other uses.
- Higher speeds are also the source of costly serious injuries and ongoing health impacts. When entering an urban area with frequent and complex interchanges reduced speed is appropriate. Reduced speed reduces engine and tire noise and airborne particulates. Finally, reduced speeds increase capacity as safe stopping distances are reduced and more vehicles can be safely accommodated.

**Suggested changes:**

Reduce Design Speed and enforce to 50 MPH.

Include traffic calming elements.

Reduce the number of lanes to a maximum of 3 lanes including freight and HOV lanes.

Reduce lane widths to 11 feet.

Provide one shoulder lane.

**Expected Outcomes**

Increase safety at merging without extended merge lanes.

Reduce construction cost with narrower lanes.

Reduce Noise impacts on bikes, pedestrians, park areas, and Vancouver neighborhoods.

Reduce tailpipe emissions.

Reduce serious injuries.

Increase the useful life of the crossing.