



Environment Justice Task Force
900 Court Street NE, Salem, OR 97301

April 19, 2010

Governor Ted Kulongoski
160 State Capitol
900 Court Street
Salem, Oregon 97301-4047

Dear Governor Kulongoski:

Pursuant to Oregon Revised Statute 182.538, the Environmental Justice Task Force (EJTF) is charged with the responsibility to advise you on environmental justice related matters occurring throughout the State. This letter is to advise you of our environmental justice concerns regarding the Columbia River Crossing Project (CRC) and Independent Review Panel.

In 2009, we received public testimony from citizens concerned with CRC's community involvement process, specifically as it relates to members of the manufactured home park community in Hayden Island, as well as other environmental justice communities in North and Northeast Portland. The Taskforce appointed two members to initiate a preliminary investigation, which included interviewing past and present members of the CRC's Community and Environmental Justice Group (CEJG) along with CRC staff and project management. The preliminary report indicated that there are systemic problems with CRC seeking and obtaining full and meaningful participation from potentially impacted Oregonians. It appeared that CRC's posture towards potentially impacted communities ran counter to the previous recommendations made by the I-5 Transportation and Trade Agreement, which suggested the use of Community Mitigation to alleviate potential impacts, particularly on environmental justice communities.

Current tensions arose primarily due to CRC's proposed "Refinement Package," which attempts to save significant project expense by making substantial cuts and modifications to project design. More than half of these cuts occur on Hayden Island, and threaten residents there with substantial impacts, including an increase of the bridge's footprint on the island from its current 8 to up to 22 lanes of traffic. These design modifications will further displace the Safeway supermarket, which is the island's only source of fresh food and medicine, as well as require a lowering of the grade of Tomahawk Drive to comply

Governor Ted Kulongoski
April 19, 2010
Page Two

with the lowered elevation of the freeway bridge, effectively separating the island into two parts. The Taskforce has learned that the majority of residents on the west side of the island are low-income, with significant populations of elderly residents with limited mobility.

Many of these elderly residents do not drive and/or do not leave the island; thus, the modifications called for by the Refinement Package severely limit their ability to navigate the island and obtain fresh food and medicine. And while these potential impacts are severe, the Taskforce is doubly concerned with CRC's inability to engage the public's participation in developing these modified plans and provide the residents of Hayden Island a meaningful opportunity to participate in the process.

The EJTF recently invited CRC staff to provide a project overview and answer questions relating to environmental justice. While the Taskforce appreciates CRC's presentation and sincerity with regard to project intent, it was apparent that CRC has not gone through a meaningful environmental justice process in developing this project. At our recent Taskforce meeting on April 9, 2010, we received additional public testimony from residents of the Hayden Island Manufactured Home Community. This community remains concerned that they have not been afforded an opportunity for meaningful involvement in the process and that their immediate health and quality of life is threatened by both the short- and long-term impacts of this project.

The EJTF is sensitive of the need to stimulate Oregon's economy in this time of recession and high unemployment and to capitalize on available federal funding to reinforce existing and build new infrastructure to accommodate our anticipated future growth. The EJTF takes no position on the CRC project itself; our charge is to ensure that issues of environmental justice are investigated and resolved and that your office is advised of such matters. It should be noted that the Hayden Island community is not against the bridge project as originally proposed; it is the modifications to this project, made without public input or proper analysis, and overall lack of community involvement that threatens this community.

Your proposed Independent Review Panel is a necessary step to ensure that the rights and interests of all Oregonians are protected through this process and that federal and state agencies adhere to federal and state law to the fullest extent possible. However, the EJTF is disappointed that no member of the Panel has specific expertise in Environmental Justice, and there is no community member from an impacted community. Given the serious environmental justice issues at play, and a process that has already had significant cost and loss of public trust, we strongly advise you to consider the appointment of two additional members to the Panel who bring (1) knowledge and an understanding of

Governor Ted Kulongoski
April 19, 2010
Page Three

environmental justice principles, and (2) personal perspective as a member of an impacted environmental justice community, particularly the Hayden Island Manufactured Home Community. No other community will be remotely as impacted as the Hayden Island Manufactured Home Community, and representation of environmental justice principles in this process is essential to ensuring governmental compliance and accountability.

Thank you for your consideration of this request. Please advise us if you require any further information.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Will Collin".

Will Collin, Chair
Oregon Environmental Justice Task Force