

March 7, 2011

Governor John Kitzhaber
160 State Capitol
900 Court Street
Salem, Oregon 97301-4047

Dear Governor Kitzhaber,

The Bicycle Transportation Alliance (BTA) supports the right bridge for the I-5 corridor. We support a bridge that dramatically improves access to biking and walking connections in the corridor, extends light rail and increased transit service to Vancouver, reduces the amount of vehicle miles traveled regionally, and is funded in part by congestion pricing.

The I-5 bridge replacement offers a one-time opportunity to unite Portland and Vancouver by foot and bicycle. Area residents deserve a truly “world class” facility that will seamlessly join the two cities.

We served on the Columbia River Crossing’s Pedestrian and Bicycle Advisory Committee (PBAC) for 2-1/2 years, trying to design such a facility. We were a major contributor to the “world class” standards developed by PBAC in the summer of 2008. HYPERLINK "http://columbiarivercrossing.org/ProjectPartners/PedAndBike.aspx" <http://columbiarivercrossing.org/ProjectPartners/PedAndBike.aspx>

We left PBAC in August 2009 when it was plain that a “world class” bicycle facility was no longer being considered, and that all standards would be stripped to a minimum while the bridge highway elements were still grossly oversized.

As we said at the time, the design had gone:

From two paths on either side of the bridge (at 12' and 26' wide) to just one
From access at both sides of I-5 (which is very wide) in Vancouver to just on one
From two elevators in the system to one
From four or more viewpoints along the route to just one
From two open-air, full-view paths to one that is deeply overhung and enclosed along half its length

Further, the quality of the bicycle and pedestrian facilities are always vastly overstated when the CRC presents them to the public:

The path is touted as "twenty-four feet wide" when in fact it is only so at its flattest,

straightest part – most of the route is just the DOT standard 16' wide.

Travel distance on the planned path is not significantly shorter than today's indirect route. Access to the path from Vancouver will require going up five blocks worth of corkscrews, a daunting undertaking for most anyone.

The under-bridge path is always depicted on a blazingly sunny day at dawn and never with a glimpse to the east with its 200 feet of concrete overhang and multiple structural walls.

The under-bridge path is described as "world class" despite the fact that no one else in the world has ever made the mistake of building one like it.

During the development of a new multi-use path across the bridge we expect:

Whichever new bridge type is chosen, the path across the bridge must meet PBAC's "world class" standards as established in June 2008.

The new bridge must provide at least two connections to Vancouver, at the waterfront and near Evergreen Blvd so users can choose to go into or bypass downtown.

A "world class" project should provide direct connections to people's destinations, not just across the bridge. The CRC must upgrade the I-5 bicycle corridor through the entire project area, creating a seamless route between Washington and Oregon. Transportation Demand Management measures should be implemented on I-5 before construction begins.

Evaluation of the true impact of a 10 lane permanent bridge on traffic patterns in downtown Portland and the Rose Quarter.

Our preliminary evaluation of the bicycle facilities on the three bridge types under consideration leads us to favor the cable-stayed and arch designs. These designs allow for a 30' pathway raised above the traffic lanes and provide critical connections within Vancouver. To be an effective route, it should have waterfront and Evergreen Blvd. connections. Both bridge types are potentially acceptable, and with legitimate and thorough PBAC review, a "world class" multi-use path could be built on either of these two bridges.

The deck truss bridge is the least desirable because of the safety, maintenance, and security concerns of placing the multi-use path in a dark and viewless box. We feel strongly that if the pedestrian and bicycle facilities on the bridge are not built to "world class" standards, the facility will be underutilized and we'll be missing an opportunity for a healthier, more livable region for generations to come. The current CRC proposal with an under-the-deck-path does not offer a connection to Evergreen, and would add several minutes travel time to all bicyclists by routing them down to water level and through downtown.

We can manage traffic, move freight, and reduce automobile trips while protecting our economy and the environment if we focus on designing a project the whole community can support. We look forward to seeing a project that takes bicyclists and these specific design issues into account. We will live with this bridge for generations; now is not the time to

ignore key project design elements and hope that it will turn out right in the end. We hope you take the issues we raise in this letter into consideration in your deliberations.

Sincerely,

Rob Sadowsky
Executive Director

Cc via email:

Governor Christine Gregoire, Washington
Matthew Garrett, Director, Oregon Department of Transportation
Paula Hammond, Secretary, Washington Department of Transportation
Sam Adams, Mayor, City of Portland
Tim Leavitt, Mayor, City of Vancouver
Jeanne Harris, Council member, City of Vancouver
Lynn Peterson, Sustainability and Transportation Policy Advisor to Governor Kitzhaber
Henry Hewitt, Past Chair, Oregon Transportation Commission
Steve Horenstein, Chair, WSU-Vancouver Advisory Council
Tom Hughes, Metro President
Rex Burkholder, Metro Council
Steve Stuart, Clark County Commissioner
Jeff Swanson, Schnitzer Steel
Jon Issacs, Executive Director, Oregon League of Conservation Voters
Andrea Durbin, Executive Director, Oregon Environmental Council
Jason Miner, Executive Director, 1000 Friends of Oregon
Mara Gross, Policy Director, Coalition for a Livable Future
Mel Rader, Executive Director, Upstream Public Health
Rob Johnson, Executive Director, Transportation Choices Coalition