

BEFORE THE METRO COUNCIL

FOR THE PURPOSE OF PROVIDING	)	RESOLUTION NO. 07- 3787
METRO COUNCIL GUIDANCE ON THE	)	
COLUMBIA RIVER CROSSING TASK	)	
FORCE CONCERNING THE RANGE OF	)	
ALTERNATIVES TO BE ADVANCED TO A	)	
DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT	)	Introduced by Councilor Robert Liberty
STATEMENT	)	
	)	

WHEREAS, the Oregon Department of Transportation and the Washington State Department of Transportation have initiated an analysis of the I-5 bridges crossing the Columbia River and I-5 between State Route 500 on the north and Columbia Boulevard on the south and nearby lands, known as the Columbia River Crossing (CRC) Project; and,

WHEREAS, as part of the CRC project, thirty-seven transportation modes or design options were identified, analyzed, variously eliminated and combined into twelve alternative project packages studied up until now; and,

WHEREAS, CRC staff have recommended to the CRC Task Force, that only three alternatives go forward for study in the draft environmental impact statement; (1) “no action”; (2) the construction of a new 10 to 12 lane freeway bridge with bus rapid transit, and demolition of the existing bridges; and (3) the construction of a new 10 to 12 lane freeway bridge with light rail, and demolition of the existing bridges, and

WHEREAS, the recommended alternatives provide a choice only between no action and two very similar alternative projects that could each cost between \$2 billion and \$6 billion; and

WHEREAS, the Oregon part of the Portland metropolitan region has already identified a shortfall of about \$6 billion for new capital projects in the current Regional Transportation Plan; and

WHEREAS, the Metro Council has endorsed goals to achieve Smart Government and Great Places which place an emphasis on prudent stewardship of the public's tax dollars and creating livable communities with a balance of transportation modes and to use these goals to shape Metro plans; and,

WHEREAS, careful consideration of the financial implications, or fiscal constraints, upon all transportation projects is a guiding principle of the current update to the Regional Transportation Plan; and,

WHEREAS, in its October 19, 2006 letter to the Columbia River Crossing, the Metro Council stated that “...we believe that transportation solutions must take into consideration cost,

feasibility, and the place any one project may have in the overall transportation improvement picture. .. The Metro Council will be fiscally responsible when considering all public investments. Project cost and a comparison with the other projects proposed within the same horizon will need to be considered;” and

WHEREAS, the financing of either of the new freeway bridge alternatives could oblige the Council, and the Joint Policy Advisory Committee on Transportation to eliminate, delay or scale-back other important regional transportation investments; and

WHEREAS, it is inappropriate to eliminate, or fail to study alternatives, before determining and comparing the fiscal, economic, social and environmental costs and benefits of those alternatives; and

WHEREAS, the project Purpose and Need Statement and project area were defined so narrowly that many other potentially good alternatives were never studied because they did not conform to the Purpose and Need statement or were outside the study area; and

WHEREAS, the Metro Council in its letter to the CRC Task Force dated October 19, 2006 stated “We believe a wider range of alternatives must be studied in order to find the solutions that deliver the best results at the lowest costs,” and

WHEREAS in the same letter the Metro Council stated that “... in the absence of compelling information to the contrary, alternatives included in the environmental impact statement should include: 1) an alternative that reuses the present bridges” and no such alternative is recommended for further study; and

WHEREAS in the same letter the Metro Council stated: “We.. .believe that options that involve even greater coordination, including possible improvements to the railroad bridge, should be further explored,” and no alternatives involving improvements to the railroad bridge were analyzed; and

WHEREAS in the same letter the Metro Council stated: “we believe that alternatives should be considered in the draft environmental impact statement that include both capital intensive and alternative approaches – unless it is clearly demonstrated during the current phase of analysis that such approaches are not viable” and all of the alternatives studied were capital intensive; and

WHEREAS, in the same letter the Metro Council urged the CRC Task Force, consistently with one of the five principles adopted in the I-5 Transportation and Trade Partnership Strategic Plan, to “explore how land use changes could help address the problem,,” and also recommended “that all transportation alternatives be evaluated for their land use implications’ but no land use alternative was considered and no study of differential land use impacts were used to evaluate the alternatives proposed for elimination for further study; and

WHEREAS, in the same letter the Council urged the CRC Task Force to develop alternatives that achieved more outcomes than just congestion relief, including maintaining and

improving air quality in the corridor and creating a “dazzling waterfront and gateway for both sides of the River.... Including actions that the Metro area could take to support the City of Vancouver’s efforts to preserve and enhance [its] downtown,” but that neither set of outcomes was used to develop an alternatives or to evaluate among the alternatives that were analyzed; and

WHEREAS, in the same letter the Council stated: “We recommend that you consider each problem element and related goal and determine how important it is compared with the others,” but in eliminating many of the alternatives the goals were given equal and decisive weight; and

WHEREAS, members of the Clark County Commission have declined to endorse the CRC staff recommendation; and

WHEREAS, the Metro Council, through the Regional Transportation Plan, is charged with planning the region's transportation system, including the I-5 freeway through the region to the Washington State line and of which the CRC project is a portion and will, along with other units of government, be required to act on the final recommendation of the CRC Task Force; and,

WHEREAS, there remains as much as \$60 million left for future study of CRC alternatives; and

WHEREAS, given the regional significance of the decision to be made by the CRC Task Force, the Metro Council believes it has a responsibility to provide clear guidance to the CRC Task Force prior to its action on the staff recommendation, (currently scheduled for February 27, 2007); now therefore

BE IT RESOLVED,

1. A draft environmental impact study analyzing only the three alternatives in the CRC staff recommendation will not provide an adequate basis for the Metro Council to support an amendment to the Regional Transportation Plan endorsing any of those alternatives; and
2. In order for the Metro Council to have a proper basis for making choices regarding the best investment of limited transportation funds for a thoughtful and integrated approach to increased mobility, accessibility, economic opportunity, and quality of life, the Council respectfully requests that the CRC Task Force, working in conjunction with those members of the Task Force, Metro and other interested units of government, to develop and explore additional, lower priced alternatives for analysis in the draft environmental impact statement, including:
  - (a) A non-capital intensive alternative, or a major element of an alternative, that emphasizes investments in and system management for I-5 and I-205, to increase flow and capacity on both bridges, including special arrangements for long-distance freight movement; and

- (b) A land use alternative, or a major land use element for an alternative, that reduces the amount of peak-hour commuting across the Columbia River sufficiently to reduce the overall project cost; and
  - (c) A supplemental bridge built to current seismic standards to carry cars, trucks, light rail, bicycle and pedestrians, that is part of an alternative that retains the existing I-5 bridges for freeway travel, with incremental improvements to the existing I-5 bridges and the key access ramps, to improve flow and increase safety on I-5; and
  - (d) An analysis of what kinds of improvements to the downstream railroad bridge could be part of a lower cost alternative, including, moving the swing span from the northern side of the bridge to a location that better aligns with the existing I-5 shipping channel spans, or building a parallel bridge, and accepts the existence of lift spans on all bridges; and
  - (e) An alternative emphasizing transit investments, including analysis of light rail using the I-205 bridge and a more comprehensive investment in transit in Vancouver, North Portland and Northeast Portland, sufficient to provide cost effect congestion relief on I-5.
3. Furthermore, that these alternatives be designed and examined in such a way that;
- (a) The ultimate recommended solution may reflect a blend derived from several alternatives that is cost-effective, multi-faceted and incremental; and
  - (b) Each of these alternatives, and the alternatives recommended for further study by CRC staff, can be easily compared with each other, and with other projects in the region, across a full range of costs and benefits (including land use costs and benefits), and
4. The Metro Council would welcome the opportunity to work with the CRC Task Force to develop a method for developing, analyzing and reviewing these alternatives within the current budget and timeline for the project, including ways which build the level of confidence in the complete and objective nature of the analysis which is needed to assure a high level of agreement about, and support, for one of the region's most important transportation decisions.

ADOPTED by the Metro Council this \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 2007.

WITHDRAWN  
David Bragdon, Council President

Approved as to Form:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Daniel B. Cooper, Metro Attorney

## STAFF REPORT

IN CONSIDERATION OF RESOLUTION NO. 07-3787, FOR THE PURPOSE OF PROVIDING METRO COUNCIL GUIDANCE TO THE COLUMBIA RIVER CROSSING TASK FORCE CONCERNING THE RANGE OF ALTERNATIVES TO BE ADVANCED TO A DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

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Date: February 14, 2007

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Mark Turpel

### BACKGROUND

The Interstate 5 Freeway (I-5) is the only continuous north/south interstate freeway on the West Coast, providing the primary corridor from Mexico to Canada for motor vehicles, including truck-hauled freight. The crossing of the Columbia River by I-5 near Hayden Island and Vancouver, Washington includes two bridges, one built in 1917 and the other in 1958. The extended peak hour demand at the I-5 Columbia River Crossing (CRC) exceeds current capacity and by the year 2020, demand is expected to grow significantly. For example, the cost of truck delay is expected to increase 140 percent by 2020.

In 1999, the Bi-State Transportation Committee recommended that the Portland/Vancouver region initiate a public process to develop a plan for the I-5 Corridor based on four principles:

- Doing nothing in the I-5 Corridor is unacceptable;
- There must be a multi-modal solution in the I-5 Corridor - there is no silver bullet;
- Transportation funds are limited. Paying for improvements in the I-5 Corridor will require new funds; and,
- The region must consider measures that promote transportation-efficient development.

Accordingly, the I-5 Transportation and Trade Partnership was constituted by Governors Locke and Kitzhaber, including a Metro Council representative. In June 2002, the Partnership completed a Strategic Plan and on November 14, 2002, the Metro Council, through Resolution No. 02-3237A, For the Purpose of Endorsing the I-5 Transportation and Trade Study Recommendations, endorsed the Strategic Plan recommendations including:

- Three through lanes in each direction on I-5, one of which an HOV lane, as feasible;
- Phased light rail loop in Clark County in the vicinity of the I-5, SR500/4th Plan and I-205 corridors;
- An additional or replacement bridge for the I-5 crossing of the Columbia River, with up to two additional lanes for merging plus 2 light rail tracks;
- Interchange improvements and additional auxiliary and/or arterial lanes where needed between SR 500 in Vancouver and Columbia Boulevard in Portland, including a full interchange at Columbia Boulevard;
- Capacity improvements for freight rail;
- Bi-state coordination of land use and management of the transportation system to reduce demand on the freeway and protect corridor improvement;
- Involving communities along the corridor to ensure final project outcomes are equitable and committing to establish a fund for community enhancement;
- Developing additional transportation demand and system strategies to encourage more efficient use of the transportation system.

Several of the recommendations from the Strategic Plan have been completed. For example, planning and environmental assessment of the I-5 Delta Park Project has been completed. Design engineering and financing are being completed currently with construction slated for initiation in the next few years to address capacity issues on I-5 between Delta Park and Lombard.

The I-5 bridge element began in February 2005 with the formation of a 39 member Columbia River Crossing (CRC) Task Force. This Task Force, which includes a Metro Council representative, developed a vision statement, purpose and need statement, screening criteria and reviewed 37 transportation modes/design options, narrowing these to 12.

In October 2007, the Metro Council, after hearing CRC staff presentations and discussing the project, approved a letter to the CRC Task Force citing seven principles including:

- Recognize the I-5 Transportation and Trade Partnership Strategic Plan;
- Use desired outcomes as a guide;
- Determine project priorities;
- Recognize financial limitations;
- Coordinate with the railroad bridge;
- Provide alternatives in the DEIS that demonstrate the fundamental choices before us;
- Provide thorough public vetting before closing options.

In November 2007, CRC staff, after further consideration of technical analyses and using the approved screening criteria and project purpose and need, recommended three alternatives be advanced to a draft environmental impact statement (DEIS). These included:

- Alternative 1) No Action;
- Alternative 2) A Replacement Bridge and Bus Rapid Transit with Complementary Express Bus Service; and
- Alternative 3) A Replacement Bridge and Light Rail Transit with Complementary Express Bus Service.

The Task Force accepted the three alternatives for purposes of taking public comment. Open houses were held and the Task Force is scheduled to make a decision about what to recommend to advance to a DEIS on February 29, 2007.

Resolution No. 07-3787 expresses concerns that the CRC staff recommendations leave a limited choice, that cost has not been given enough consideration, that seismic standards, while very important, have not been applied consistently, the interactions between the railroad bridge and existing or new bridges has not been analyzed for possible synergistic opportunities for finding solutions, bridge heights may be excessive at the northern end, land use alternatives have been dismissed without sufficient consideration and that tolling or different tax structures could help address the problem and have not been given adequate consideration.

Resolution No. 07-3787 includes resolves that the three CRC recommended alternatives will not provide an adequate basis for the Metro Council to support an amendment of the RTP, that to obtain a proper basis for making choices the following should also be considered: a non-capital intensive alternative, land use alternative, supplemental bridge (as included in Resolution No. 07-3782), analysis of improvements to the railroad bridge, an alternative emphasizing transit investments. Further, Resolution 07-3787 includes resolves concerning a complete analysis of the full range of costs and benefits and that the ultimate recommended solution could be a blend of alternatives.

In addition to Resolution 07-3787, there is Resolution No. 07-3782, FOR THE PURPOSE OF ESTABLISHING METRO COUNCIL RECOMMENDATIONS CONCERNING THE RANGE OF ALTERNATIVES TO BE ADVANCED TO A DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT FOR THE COLUMBIA RIVER CROSSING PROJECT. Resolution No. 07-3782 recommends accepting the CRC staff recommendations with conditions. These conditions include: 1) a supplemental bridge option; 2) a notation that the Metro Council has a strong interest in light rail transit to Vancouver, Washington and for a maximum of ten lanes on I-5 crossing the Columbia River; 3) a caution about the ability to finance a large CRC project; 4) and the need for mitigation of air quality emissions, better transportation links to the two halves of Hayden Island, investigating capping I-5 in downtown Vancouver, pursuing transportation demand management and transportation system management policies and addressing environmental justice issues pertaining to the CRC project.

## **ANALYSIS/INFORMATION**

### **1. Known Opposition**

Concerns with the CRC staff recommendations include: 1) interest in finding a lower cost option(s); 2) concerns that either bus rapid transit or light rail transit will not provide appropriate transit service; 3) air quality, noise, environmental justice equity and other impacts to those living along the I-5 alignment; 4) increased demands on southern portions of the Portland metropolitan freeway system such as Interstate 84, I-5 through the Rose Quarter and points south; 5) concern that the CRC project could use up most or all of the transportation funds needed for projects throughout the region; 6) concern that the CRC staff recommendation was not consistent with the I-5 Transportation and Trade Partnership Strategic Plan, including maximum number of lanes and transit mode.

### **2. Legal Antecedents**

#### **Federal**

- National Environmental Policy Act
- Clean Air Act
- SAFETEA-LU

#### **State**

- State Planning Goals
- State Transportation Planning Rule
- Oregon Transportation Plan
- Oregon Highway Plan
- Oregon Public Transportation Plan
- Oregon Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan

#### **Metro**

- Resolution No. 02-3237A, For the Purpose of Endorsing the I-5 Transportation and Trade Study Recommendations.
- Ordinance No. 04-1045A, For the Purpose of Amending the 2000 Regional Transportation Plan ("RTP") for Consistency with the 2004 Interim Federal RTP and Statewide Planning Goals.

The 2004 Regional Transportation Plan as adopted by the Metro Council includes the following in the RTP Project List: 1) Project 1002 Vancouver Light Rail Loop, Expo Center to Vancouver, 2) Projects 4002 and 4003, I-5 Interstate Bridge and I-5 widening, \$251 million for acquiring right-of-way and "improving I-5/Columbia River bridge (local share of joint project) based on recommendations in I-5 Trade Corridor Study" and, 3) Project 4000, Vancouver Rail Bridge Replacements, to "replace rail bridge

swing span based on recommendations from I-5 Trade Corridor EIS study". These projects are not presently part of the financially constrained system of the RTP.

### **3. Anticipated Effects**

The passage of this resolution would give policy guidance to the Metro Council representative serving on the Task Force. The Task Force vote of its 39 members will be taken under advisement by the Oregon Department of Transportation, Washington State Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration and Federal Transit Administration. Any action to advance alternatives to a DEIS would still require a decision about a preferred alternative and amendment of the Regional Transportation Plan - which would require a separate Metro Council approval.

### **4. Budget Impacts**

This action would not have a direct impact to the Metro budget. However, Metro Council policies about the funding of the Regional Transportation Plan could influence choices about alternatives.

## **RECOMMENDED ACTION**

Consider both Resolution No. 07-3782 and Resolution No. 07-3787 and establish Metro Council policy guidance.