

October 27, 2005 Open House Presentations Q & A Notes

The following summarizes discussion between meeting attendees and Jay Lyman, Columbia River Crossing Consultant Team Project Manager, during two open house presentations on Thursday, October 27, 2005, at the Oregon Association of Minority Entrepreneurs in Portland, Oregon.

Project Timing & Forecasts

Several members of the audience asked about the project timeline and its status, with one attendee hoping the project could be expedited to help solve current traffic congestion. Lyman explained the current lack of funding beyond the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), making quick construction a challenge. If funding is allocated, the EIS will be complete in 2008, with construction potentially starting in 2010 and finishing in 2013.

Other attendees asked whether the public could offer ideas and alternatives at this point, and Lyman said the project sponsors are seeking ideas during the current scoping phase. Those ideas would be measured using evaluation criteria now being developed to decide which would proceed to the next phase.

An attendee asked how future job growth would be predicted, and whether employers could attract workers despite traffic congestion. Lyman answered that traffic growth would be forecast for the next 25–30 years and include data on projected areas where growth is expected. This information will ensure that the new crossing will best accommodate the traffic generated by new jobs and how people will commute to them.

Freight and Commuter Mobility

Audience members stated that more shippers rely on trucks and the proportion of freight carried by trucks is increasing. An attendee mentioned a study of carrying both freight and commuter rail traffic on existing lines. Lyman replied that the analysis showed commuter rail is not feasible because freight uses most of the capacity of the existing rail corridor. However, Columbia River Crossing design considerations would relate to rail freight movement, including how it moves across the river.

An audience member asked what percentage of traffic crossing the river is composed of trucks. Lyman said trucks constitute approximately 10% of the vehicle crossings.

An attendee asked whether maintenance to the existing bridges would affect traffic. Lyman said a maintenance traffic plan would address any repairs until the bridges' replacement.

Ideas

Some audience members suggested building another bridge between West Vancouver and West Portland with no lift span and including tolls. Lyman replied that, while this alternative showed

benefits during the previous I-5 Partnership process, it didn't do as well as other alternatives to address traffic congestion. Similarly, a westside freeway was initially considered, but was determined to be very expensive, with significant environmental impacts and conflicts with land use regulations. (Information on west side alternatives is available on the I-5 Partnership Web site at www.i-5partnership.com, or by linking from the Columbia River Crossing Web site at www.columbiarivercrossing.com.)

Conflicting interests between Portland, outlying areas, and Clark County were mentioned as a challenge to the project. Lyman responded that the final solution must be acceptable to both sides of the Columbia River.

Funding

An audience member asked what would happen to the project if Initiative 912 passed, repealing the gas tax used for transportation projects in Washington. Lyman responded that \$50 million of the gas tax money is funding the Columbia River Crossing NEPA. If the initiative passed, the funds would go away. The project team is working on alternate funding to keep the project moving forward, no matter the voting results.