

44473/BSM/jeb

December 14, 2006

Mr. Douglas B. MacDonald
Secretary of Transportation
Washington State Dept of Transportation
Transportation Building, PO Box 47300
Olympia WA 98504-7300

Mr. Matthew Garrett, Director
Oregon Department of Transportation
Office of the Director
355 Capitol St. NE, Suite 135
Salem, OR 97301-3871

Dear Mr. MacDonald and Mr. Garrett:

We write today at the request of the full C-TRAN Board of Directors to express our serious and growing concerns over the speed and process with which the Columbia River Crossing project is advancing; and about the equity with which Light Rail Transit (LRT) and Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) are being evaluated in the alternatives. C-TRAN is the public transit authority that provides service to six million riders a year in Clark County and the Portland area. Therefore, we seek a fair, objective, and defensible analysis of the HCT options in order to pass the rigorous new Federal Transit Administration (FTA) standards and to hopefully achieve a high degree of public support. C-TRAN is not an advocate for LRT or BRT; we wish only to ensure that the process used to evaluate the alternatives is fair, honest, holistic, and defensible for all HCT options.

The CRC Task Force recommendations (enclosed) were distributed at the November 29, 2006, CRC Task Force meeting. The recommendation included two transit modes, BRT and LRT, both with complementary express bus to advance to the DEIS. The Task Force voted to "accept" the recommendations with specific instruction that they be taken out for public comment and a final vote be taken at the February Task Force meeting. The official vote according to the predetermined process was to be held December 13, 2006, which would have allowed each member of the Task Force time to present the staff alternatives to their respective bodies. Instead, without prior knowledge or prior amendment to the agenda members of the CRC Task Force voted to accept the staff alternatives to proceed to public comment that night (Wednesday, November 29, 2006). We are concerned with the push to further accelerate the schedule to meet federal funding requirements without including public input that accurately describes the HCT options, or a fully optimized comparison between LRT and BRT, or the meeting process of calling for a vote without notification.

Our concerns with the conclusions presented to-date are:

- "Lessons learned" as reported in the enclosure depict the BRT option as a less than viable alternative it appears that an equal focus is not paid to the BRT option.
- Type of vehicles selected to represent the BRT option does not maximize the capacity capability of a High Capacity Transit (HCT) system.
- LRT is depicted through Vancouver in a fixed guideway, C-TRAN staff was informed at the design charrette that BRT may have to maneuver through city streets.

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- Capital costs have been under developed and no project-specific cost information has been made available to date. Industry average capital cost data referenced in the recommendations appears to have artificially inflated the average BRT capital costs while reducing the average LRT cost per mile.
- The operating cost information used a base operating cost per mile of \$10 for both BRT and LRT, however because the LRT line south of the Bridge Influence Area (BIA) was existing, the operating cost of this section of the line was not included in the cost comparison making BRT appear to be significantly higher than LRT.
- The alignments proposed to-date for BRT do not maximize the benefit of a true BRT system.

Currently, the BRT option is neither well defined nor optimized in a manner to demonstrate how a viable solution could be designed and built to meet the forecasted transit travel demand.

In the meantime, based on the project's desire to be on the front end of the federal reauthorization process in Washington DC, CRC staff has further accelerated the project schedule which now requires the two transit modes to be optimized in a matter of a few weeks.

It is our desire that the CRC project schedule be slowed down to allow for an accurate development of optimized BRT alternative that is communicated fairly to the public, and that prior to the DEIS the optimized HCT alternatives be presented to the C-TRAN Board of Directors for concurrence. We appreciate your prompt attention to this very important issue and look forward to your reply.

Sincerely,

Betty Sue Morris
Chair, C-TRAN

Tim Leavitt
Incoming Chair, C-TRAN

Enclosure

c: Mr. Richard Krochalis, FTA Region X Administrator
Doug Ficco, CRC Project Director
John Osborn, ODOT CRC Project Director
Kris Strickler, CRC Deputy Project Director
Hal Dengerink, CRC Task Force Project Co-Chair
Henry Hewitt, CRC Task Force Project Co-Chair
C-TRAN Board of Directors
Ed Barnes, WSDOT Commissioner
Jeff Hamm, Incoming Executive Director/CEO