



Washington State Legislature

March 12th, 2015

Congresswoman Jaime Herrera Beutler
C/O Ryan Hart
O.O. Howard House
750 Anderson Street, Suite B
Vancouver, WA 98661

Congresswoman Herrera Beutler:

We count ourselves fortunate to have a good working relationship with you that allows us to fully represent our constituencies. We realize that you have many important items on your plate, and with the emphasis you place on economic development, freight mobility, and congestion relief, we are reaching out to you to offer yet another opportunity for partnership.

Following the demise of the failed Columbia River Crossing (CRC), we jump started a Bi-State Bridge Coalition last year because we were seeking positive solutions to move our community forward. We engaged legislators from both sides of the Columbia River to begin discussions about new cross river solutions that would improve freight mobility and reduce traffic congestion. These discussions continue today.

In our duty to be responsive state legislators, we accepted all meeting requests over the past year with a variety of transportation engineers in the region who wished to share their professional opinions on a path forward for new cross river solutions in the I-5 corridor. They contacted us because of our willingness to begin anew.

A strong federal component must be central to the financing of any new interstate project that is a critical piece of our federal highway system. Therefore we respectfully urge your support for a transparent community discussion on all viable options and to bring a federal financial commitment to the table with the precedent setting bi-state agreement (see attachment) that ensured the successful construction of the I-205 bridge. As a member of our federal delegation, your leadership will play a critical role in advancing an affordable solution that meets our region's transportation needs.

Brainstorming with engineers and other legislators, we are advancing informal project concepts that utilize a streamlined, practical design without tolls. It is our hope to begin facilitating a broader community discussion about this rough frame work of an idea that we are calling the I-5 Practical Design Fly-over (I-5 PDF). This idea has generated much excitement. A flyover design refers to an expressway that does not contain exits or off-ramps.

The Fly-over would launch from the area of the Mill Plain/I-5 interchange and head straight south, bi-passing main intersections at Marine Drive and Hayden Island. The existing I-5 bridge structures and freeway would remain and upon completion of the new structure, the old spans would convert to a local access frontage road and serve as exits/onramps from the new bridge structure for

access to downtown Vancouver and Hayden Island/Jantzen Beach areas. The repurposed I-5 spans could be modernized to create safer bike and pedestrian access as well as wider lanes for local traffic.

Since this Fly-over design would not include costly interchanges on Hayden Island (estimated to be approximately \$1 billion of the former CRC cost), and without the \$1 billion in light rail costs, and no substantial interchange work in downtown Vancouver, the I-5 PDF could be phased in and paid for within existing transportation budgets using Federal and State dollars over the next few years. Preliminary and very rough cost estimates range from \$1 billion to \$1.5 billion.

Rough mechanics for the fly-over include a segmental box girder concrete 6 lane bridge, located upstream from the existing structures and will flow in a straight line due south from Mill Plain and head south towards Portland Meadows. The new structure would be toll free and would not contain light rail. The fly-over design would require very minimal right of way land acquisition since the bulk of the bridge is built in the air, with minimal pier landings on the ground. The fly-over spans could be poured in sections, in place, sourcing local aggregate to reduce costs. The new span would be high enough to allow for clearances at the existing lift span. Buses would provide the mass transit requirement to obtain federal funding. The initial phase could address seismic upgrades to the existing I-5 structures to make them earthquake proof by installing drilled shafts next to the piers. These important seismic upgrades would extend the life of the current spans so they can provide many more decades of local service.

We want to underscore this is just one idea for our communities in Washington and Oregon to consider. It has been said the journey of 1,000 miles begins with the first step. The I-5 PDF is one rough idea of many to consider and discuss. We welcome any and all practical and affordable ideas that have a modicum of chance to gain broad community support.

Business leaders and elected officials all agree it's time to let go of the rejected and failed CRC project. Our citizens want visionary leaders to find new and workable solutions for the future. We are State Legislators because we want to solve problems and find credible solutions. We invite our constituents to join in this important discussion to relieve traffic congestion and improve freight mobility in the I-5 corridor.

Please accept this letter as an invitation to meet with us as soon as your schedule allows in your Vancouver office.

Sincerely,



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Enclosed: 1977 I-205 Bi-State Agreement