

Testimony before the
Joint Transportation Committee
HB 2098 -2

17-years ago, in the summer of 2006, ODOT eliminated for further consideration all low-level moveable span components.



Memorandum

June 7, 2006

TO: Doug Ficco, John Osborn
FROM: CRC Engineering Team
SUBJECT: Screening of RC-1, RC-2, RC-7, and RC-8 Moveable Span Components

Overview

In the process of developing the River Crossing (RC) components and packaging them with the Roadway components, it has become apparent that those RC components that include a low-level moveable span should be removed from further consideration and not be included in alternative packaging issues relating to bridge openings and high maintenance and operations costs that exist with the current bridges would be perpetuated with a new low-level moveable span. Although the number of lifts would likely be reduced when compared to the existing number of openings, they would still occur and therefore would still impede interstate traffic. Moveable spans are more costly in both initial cost and maintenance and operations when compared to a fixed span.

They failed to seriously consider the height limitations, safety, visual and environmental impacts, and costs of a fixed span bridge and stubbornly refused to reconsider anything else. If they had not eliminated other options back then, the project could be finished by now.

The Freeway:

First. Let's dispel the notion that the Interstate Bridge is built on rotting wooden piles and will certainly collapse in the next major offshore earthquake. This is a "Chicken Little" paranoid

scenario trumped up by ODOT two decades ago to justify demolishing the existing Bridge and building a “Mega Project”.

The Interstate Bridge, or rather bridges, built at separate times to accommodate increased traffic demand are now “Functionally Obsolete”. This means they don’t meet current Interstate Freeway standards, being built before the development of the Federal Interstate Highway System. This does not mean they are “Structurally Obsolete”. In fact, these historic iconic Bridges are among the best maintained bridges in Oregon’s highway system.

A new bridge is needed to meet Interstate standards, but the old bridges are more than adequate for light rail, active transportation, and even local Hayden Island traffic. A new Bridge would need to carry eight lanes and have an opening span but does not have to be any higher than the existing Bridges. This allows the freeway to continue to pass under the BNSF Railroad, avoiding the environmental impact of a high, unsafe, ugly, and very costly SR-14 interchange in downtown Vancouver.

The cost of building an adjacent Interstate-5, seismically sound, midlevel, single deck, bridge over the Columbia River including grade level approaches should not exceed a billion dollars.

High-Capacity Transit:

The capital cost of developing an effective Light Rail Transit corridor between Vancouver and Portland City Center should be less than a half a billion dollars since most of it already exists.

C-TRAN operates the “Vine”, a Bus Rapid Transit line between downtown Vancouver and Vancouver Mall along Fourth Plain Blvd. They are building a second line east on Mill Plain Blvd and have plans for another line north. These lines can converge at “Turtle Place” (7th and Main) which is the logical transfer locating to MAX, TriMet’s Bus Rapid Transit System.

An extension of the MAX Yellow Line from its existing terminus at the EXBO Center to Turtle Place with a station on Hayden Island is all that is needed to operate a very effective, frequent, and well-connected interstate Rapid Transit service.

A new seismically sound Portland Harbor Bridge that could also accommodate local traffic and active transportation would be needed. The existing north bound interstate bridge can easily be repurposed for its original use, carrying passengers on trains.

Interchanges:

None of the Vancouver Interchanges need to be rebuilt, the Hayden Island Interchange can be reduced to southbound only, and with a few minor tweaks, the Marine Blvd. Interchange can remain as it is.

ODOT should fess up to wasting hundreds of millions of dollars and 17-years of time on an unaffordable and unbuildable project. The State Legislature should not give them another dime until they do.

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