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June 12, 2013

Rear Admiral Keith A. Taylor
District Commander
Thirteenth Coast Guard District
915 2nd Avenue, Room 3590
Seattle, WA 98174-1067

Dear Admiral Taylor:

I am writing to provide comment for the Application for the Proposal to Replace the Existing Movable I-5 Bridge across the Columbia River, Docket ID: USCG-20136-0286.

As you are aware, I and other Members of the Pacific Northwest Congressional Delegation whose districts are upriver of the Columbia River Interstate Bridge have previously written to your office to voice our concerns with the serious limitations of the current design for the Columbia River Crossing (CRC). The height restrictions of this design have the potential to negatively impact not just current upriver businesses whose cargo must pass under the bridge to reach their intended markets, but could also provide a chilling impact to future business development due to the permanent, impassable nature of the design for larger vessels and cargoes.

In addition to the grave concerns with the height restrictions of the current design, other important questions and concerns have been raised that deserve your attention:

- The CRC Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for the Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA) analyzes a bridge that has a height of 95 feet, but no analysis has been provided for the reworking of the design to accommodate 116 ft. of clearance. Given that the DEIS fails to analyze a bridge clearance that is 21 feet higher than the LPA's design, how does this affect the permit application under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)? Is a Supplemental EIS going to be required before a permit can be issued?
- When the Glenn Jackson Bridge was permitted, the analysis determined that a clearance of 144 ft. would be required in order to ensure that navigation wouldn't be impeded on the Columbia River. Have the standards for river navigation changed? If not, can you explain how a clearance of 116 ft. complies with the findings for the Glenn Jackson Bridge?

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- A great deal of focus has been given to providing mitigation for the three metal fabricators that are located upriver of the Interstate Bridge. I am concerned that no alternatives have been considered which would eliminate the need for taxpayer-funded mitigation, and would ensure their continued ability to freely operate from their current sites of operation and support hundreds of local jobs. Doesn't the need for such substantial mitigation point to serious design flaws that limit navigation? I would offer that building a bridge without adequate clearance is an unfortunate choice that could be remedied through the redesign of this project.

The Columbia River, the 3rd largest river in the nation, is a vital navigation link that provides for tens of thousands of jobs, and more than \$20 billion in annual cargo revenues. The importance of protecting our river commerce, both now and in the future, cannot be understated. I urge you to do all you can to ensure that the final outcome of the permitting process protects the free navigation of the river and our regional economy.

Thank you for your time and attention to this matter. For your reference, copies of my previous correspondence have been attached. In addition, I have included a letter from Congressman Duncan Hunter, Chairman of the Subcommittee on Coast Guard and Maritime Transportation to Admiral Robert J. Papp, Jr., noting his strong concerns with the Columbia River Crossing project.

Sincerely,


Jaime Herrera Beutler
Member of Congress

Enclosures

CC: Colonel John W. Eisenhower, P.E.
Commander and District Engineer, USACE