

Mayor Adams explains position shift on I-5 bridge

Open Forum

To The Editor:

For reasons that are both fiscal and political, I believe the ground has recently shifted under the proposal for a new I-5 Columbia River Crossing (CRC).

First, a little history. On July 9, 2008 in an Oregonian guest editorial, I wrote:

"A bridge, yes, but only the right bridge ... I will strongly oppose a final Columbia River Crossing project proposal that fails to address Portland's goals. I would rather miss this round of federal funding and live with the challenges and vulnerabilities of the current bridge for the next 10 or 20 years than build a bad bridge that would punish Portland for perhaps another 100 years."

Today, I am even more committed to this statement.

I intend to continue working to shape this bridge, even though it is not a city-led project. In early spring of this year, policy and political differences among project sponsors risked sinking the entire project in cross-river disagreement. I have great respect for Vancouver, Washington Mayor Royce Pollard, although we do not always agree. We did find enough common ground to offer a compromise in a Feb. 25, 2009 joint guest editorial titled "The way forward across the Columbia," proposing:

"... [a] new cross-river partnership [agreement] that actively manages daily mobility to get the most out of our investment... [like] no other jurisdiction in the nation has done... to blaze a new trail toward smart transportation management and protect our investment for generations to come."

Our February agreement assumed tolls on the project, and separated into

two parts the controversial issue of how big to build the bridge versus how many lanes to actually open to traffic.

We proposed that the bridge be built to accommodate up to three add/drop lanes and three through-lanes. Those lanes would not be created equal. The lanes would be phased in and managed over time. Decisions about when to open lanes — and how many — would be made based on the goals of improving freight movement and reducing vehicle miles traveled and pollution.

Our fact-based decision-making process noted that on-the-ground success for both our cities had much riding on details that were yet to be determined.

"Done right, the project promises safer and more reliable multimodal travel for people and goods while reducing negative impacts on our environment. Done wrong, today's gridlock will move south to downtown Portland. And 20 years from now the bridge will once again be filled with stop-and-go traffic."

Since this compromise last February, several things have changed.

The project budget must be cut. The project has a price tag that we now know far exceeds likely available funds. Our federal legislators have made it clear that we need to scale back the project to win their support.

Tolls are in question. A mayoral election in Vancouver has called into question whether tolls will be included to help underwrite the cost of building and maintaining a new bridge.

Local funding of light rail is unknown. Based on public support for a "no tolls" option in Vancouver, I have new concerns about whether Vancouver

voters will approve a required sales tax increase for light rail line operating funds.

I will not get involved in the Vancouver mayoral election. And I accept the will of the voters in Vancouver and Clark County on light rail and the CRC.

But out of respect for our cross-river neighbors I want to ensure clear communication between us, so I must reiterate my stance: No tolls, no new bridge. No light rail, no Columbia River Crossing project.

I agreed to a compromise in February because of the promised benefits of the CRC project: Improved freight movement, reduced congestion, and lower greenhouse gas emissions. Without tolls and light rail, I do not believe these benefits can be achieved.

Tolls and light rail offer our strongest tool to manage demand and regulate congestion. I believe an untolled bridge of any size — or a crossing without light rail — will invite more freeway trips, leading to even greater sprawl and congestion.

That congestion hurts freight move-

ment and increases greenhouse gas emissions. And without tolls to moderate demand and light rail to get cars off the road, today's congestion at the bridge moves south to the heart of Portland.

In February, I agreed to move forward with a bridge structure to accommodate up to 12 lanes — emphasis added — contingent on performance. Today, faced with financial realities and the fact that the project might not win Vancouver's approval for tolls and light rail funding, I believe we need to define and apply those performance goals now, and use them to make smart cost-cutting decisions.

The fiscal context for the CRC project has changed dramatically. The political assumptions for the CRC are no longer on solid ground. Thus, I am suspending my support for the compromise agreement I helped fashion in February.

And it must meet a clear-eyed cost/benefit analysis in light of today's financial realities — an analysis based on the performance goals on which we, as a region, must all agree.

Weaknesses in health reform

To The Editor:

In "Time to rethink our health reform strategy," Peter Shapiro calls for supporting single-payer health care and points out weaknesses in Obama's health care reform proposal. Here are other weaknesses. Obama placates nationalists by saying his reform helps U.S. companies compete, globally, with companies that don't have to insure their employees. Many of these companies operate in countries with national health plans. Private insurance companies and for-profit health care are the problem, not workers in other countries.

To appease the right wing, immigrants without proper documentation are excluded from Obama's reform, maintaining their third-class tax status as workers. Kowtowing to fundamentalists, Obama has guaranteed that

women's right to abortion will not be recognized. Access to abortion helped women gain security in the workforce and needs to be accessible to all women.

Obama's plan caters to the same insurance, pharmaceutical and private hospital giants that got him into office. We need a health care plan that covers everyone's medical needs and only organized labor can get it for us. As rank-and-file unionists, we can pressure national labor leadership and elected officials to fight for single-payer health care.

Travis Giobbi
Painters Local 10
Portland

Glenn Kirkindall
UFCW Local 555
Portland

Invite young workers to help protest cuts in public service

To The Editor:

I greatly appreciated the front page article on the importance of attracting younger workers to the labor movement, and the effectiveness of reaching out to their issues.

A vehicle to do just that is the exciting action decided in the resolution adopted by the Washington State Labor Council convention that Washington Federation of State Employees Local 304 President Rodolfo Franco informed Labor Press readers about in a recent issue. It calls for "a statewide week of action to protest cuts in public services and job losses."

The WSLC resolution also "demands taxing the wealthy and corporate profits."

This would be a great activity to get younger women and men workers involved in. I'm sure the layoffs and loss of medical benefits must be hitting them and their families very hard.

The WSLC hasn't announced the week yet, but I hope it's very soon as the situation is a disaster and getting worse.

Henry Noble
IAM 751
Retired
Seattle

Witt fights for working families

To The Editor:

There has been quite a bit of rhetoric going around about many of our elected officials in Clatsop County and, in at least one case, I have come to question what's the real concern of the people who are so upset about State Representative Brad Witt supporting the local economy and jobs in the community. Can anyone tell me?

Brad was elected to represent the best interests of District 31 in Salem. Apparently creating good family jobs and supporting the community's well being is not important to some of the people who think Brad should be replaced. If these values are not important, then what are the priorities of those outside interests who object to Brad's performance? What is more important than families putting food on the table?

Everyone in Oregon is facing very trying times. Unemployment is over 12 percent statewide and even higher in Clatsop County. Please, someone tell me why working to create jobs and putting men and women back to work is something that is being portrayed as an

evil deed!

Perhaps one answer might be that the people who are so opposed to making family wage jobs a priority should announce their alternative for creating jobs. Maybe one of the opponents of building a better economy should become a candidate for the State Legislature and roll out a better plan to put Oregonians back to work. Maybe those who are complaining the loudest can tell us how to replace the lost \$6 million revenue that will go to the school district, or how to build a new fire station that will be funded because of the pipeline project, or some kind of plan for making up the economic development that will not occur if the radical extremists get their way.

Or, maybe the interests of the opponents who are being bused into District 31 from out of town seem insignificant or self serving when they are openly shared with the people who need jobs!

John Endicott
Business Manager
Plumbers and Fitters 290
Tualatin

Mayor Sam Adams
Portland

Please support United Way

To The Editor:

Labor's Community Service Agency knows only too well what a difficult and discouraging year it has been for so many union brothers and sisters in our community. As Oregon economic woes continue, layoffs, company closures, and the loss of so many union jobs generate a steady flood of requests for help of all kinds — employment resources, job training, social services, food, clothing, shelter and so much more.

But LCSA also knows that labor comes together during tough times. Each year, the Portland metropolitan labor community joins forces with United Way of the Columbia-Willamette to mobilize around a single goal: the annual United Way Campaign.

Organized labor's participation in the campaign provides opportunities to reach out and impact the lives of union families in a positive way.

Local union leaders understand that a healthy, caring community is vital to a successful economic recovery. Your previous contributions to United Way speak volumes about that understanding, and we are grateful for your support. As we undertake the 2009 United Way Labor Campaign, please keep in mind that United Way is the one way that helps us all.

Glenn Shuck
Executive Director
LCSA