

# I-5 Bridge Sponsors Council favors 10-lane span

Labor, business, and environmental leaders applauded a unanimous vote by the Columbia River Crossing Project Sponsors Council to replace the aging Interstate 5 bridge between Oregon and Washington with a new 10-lane span.

The bistate Project Sponsors Council is comprised of 11 public officials, including representatives of governors from Oregon and Washington, and mayors from Portland and Vancouver. From the outset it has been imperative that all parties agree on the project design in order to secure funding from the federal government. Project planners expect to pay for the bridge project from three sources — the federal government, the two states, and a bridge toll.

In March 2009 the Project Sponsors Council unanimously approved a 12-lane replacement bridge that included six through lanes (three lanes in

each direction) and three lanes in each direction to connect interchanges in a five-mile area, a light rail line, and lanes for bicycles and pedestrians. Labor unions supported this plan, but environmental and neighborhood groups balked at the size and cost (\$4.2 billion), causing some members of the Sponsors Council to change their minds.

[The vetting process actually started in 2005 with a 39-member task force. The group met regularly over several years and held numerous public hearings before boiling down a list of proposals to five — including doing nothing. In the end, the task force recommended a 12-lane replacement bridge to the Sponsors Council.]

In March 2010, the Sponsors Council brought together key players to resolve their differences. As that was going on, Oregon Gov. Ted Kulongoski and Washington Gov. Chris Gregoire convened an Independent Review Panel in April to ensure that key project study assumptions and methods were reasonable for the project.

It also was in April that U.S. Sen. Patty Murray, (D-WA), told union officials that if political consensus wasn't reached soon, the bridge project would be left out of the 2010-2016 highway reauthorization bill, which was under discussion. Murray sits on the Senate Appropriations Committee and chairs the Transportation Subcommittee, which means she has significant influence on funding for the project.

"If I don't have agreement about what it's going to look like, we're going to miss out for probably the next six or eight years before we'll be able to ask for federal funds for that," she said.

On Aug. 9, a new recommendation calling for a bridge that can accommodate up to 10 lanes with a new design for a Hayden Island interchange passed the Sponsors Council, again by unanimous vote. The estimated cost for the scaled-back version is between \$2.6 and \$3.6 billion.

In a joint press release, Tom Chamberlain, president of the Oregon AFL-CIO; Ryan Deckert, president of the Oregon Business Association; and Jon Isaacs, executive director of the Oregon League of Conservation Voters, said the new proposal balances the

needs and concerns of a diverse group. "Its thoughtful consideration of concerns that have been brought up throughout the process has resulted in a broad base of support that should

successfully carry it through to completion," they said. "It is vital, though, that we act quickly. We have had sufficient years of study and enough proposals to know what will work for our

communities and our region as a whole. Now we need to approve a plan and get people to work."

The project is projected to create 27,000 jobs over the next 10 years.

## Transit Union files charge against TriMet

Amalgamated Transit Union Local 757 is accusing TriMet of violating the state's Public Employee Collective Bargaining Act. In an unfair labor practice charge filed Aug. 10, the union says TriMet bargained in bad faith when it submitted new issues in its final offer.

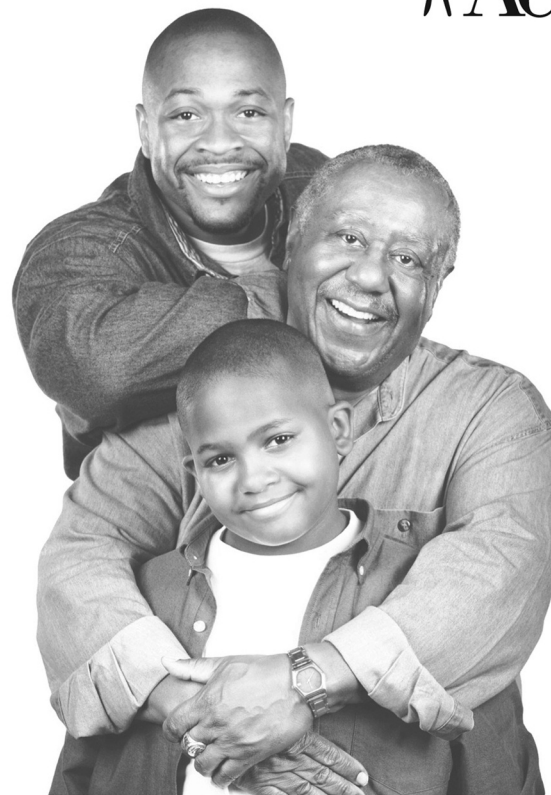
"TriMet proposed new take-aways that were not brought forward during bargaining," explains the Local 757 web site. "Therefore, the union is requesting that the parties return to the bargaining table before arbitration."

After bargaining since October 2009, the two sides declared impasse July 13, and presented final offers July 20. Under a new law that prevents transit district employees from striking, contracts are settled by binding arbitration when the two sides cannot reach agreement.

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