

# Oregon Building Trades backs bill to build new bridge

The Oregon State Building and Construction Trades Council is supporting a bill in the Oregon Legislature to pay the state's share of the \$3.5 billion Interstate 5 bridge replacement and freeway safety project, also known as the Columbia River Crossing (CRC).

**House Bill 2800** would allow the state to borrow up to \$450 million — its portion of the cost of the project. The bill has a "Buy America" provision for steel, iron, coatings for steel and iron, and other manufactured products; it contains apprenticeship training language that is better than existing requirements by the Oregon Department of Transportation; and it references goals "to maximize economic development opportunities for small businesses."

But HB 2800 does place several conditions on the money. It would allow Oregon to pay only if:

- Washington state lawmakers come up with their \$450 million share of the project's finance plan;
  - The federal government comes through with at least \$800 million for light rail;
  - Toll revenue pencils out through the investment grade analysis now under way;
  - The U.S. Coast Guard approves plans for a 116-foot-high bridge. The CRC filed its bridge permit application on Jan. 30.
- John Mohlis, executive secretary of the Oregon State Building and Construction Trades Council, said construction unions support the bill, and he is confident lawmakers will, too.

"It won't be easy, but I believe it will get done, by mid-March," he said.

Oregon Senate President Peter Courtney (D-Salem) and House Speaker Tina Kotek (D-Portland) appointed a special joint committee to work on the bill. The committee is comprised of the membership of the Senate Business and Transportation and House Transportation and Economic Development committees. It is co-chaired by Sen. Bruce Starr (R-Hillsboro), Sen. Lee Beyer (D-Springfield), Rep. Cliff Bentz (R-Ontario), and Rep. Tobias Read (D-Beaverton).

Both Courtney and Kotek support replacing the bridge.

The first meeting and public hearing of the Joint Committee was held Feb. 11. Union business managers, agents, organizers, and members of construction unions were there in force, reminding lawmakers that the bridge replacement is a regional economic stimulus project; that it will create 1,900 construction jobs for seven to nine years; and that it will secure over \$1 billion of federal money for the local economy.

Gov. John Kitzhaber also testified in favor of the bridge replacement.

The Columbian newspaper reported that on Feb. 1, **Washington** state Sen. Tracey Eide (D-Federal Way), sent a letter to Gov. Jay Inslee expressing her support for the CRC. Eide, co-chair of the Senate's Transportation Committee, argued that the project has come too far and is too important to turn away from current plans.

"Starting over will leave the states of

Washington and Oregon with a vulnerable bridge that is nearly 100 years old that does not adequately meet basic economic and safety needs in its most important commercial corridor," Eide wrote.

Eide's letter follows an earlier letter from the Transportation Committee's other co-chair, Sen. Curtis King (R-Yakima). King, who has been critical of the CRC, called for a "new direction" on the project and laid out a five-point plan to rethink the CRC. That includes dropping light rail, currently planned as part of the project.

In other CRC news, Oregon's **Clackamas County Board of Commissioners** failed to pass a resolution Feb. 7 opposing the bridge replacement project. The resolution, submitted at the last minute by newly-elected chair John Ludlow, would have declared that the county "strongly objects to the efforts to commit any funding to the Columbia River Crossing as currently planned."

The Oregonian newspaper reported that Ludlow proposed the resolution without any notice to the board, which caused two commissioners to admonish him.

Ludlow and newly-elected Commissioner Tootie Smith voted for the resolution. Commissioner Martha Schrader, also newly-elected, voted against it. Commissioner Paul Savas abstained, and Commissioner Jim Bernard was not present.

The commission is non-partisan, but Ludlow and Smith are Tea Party Republicans. Savas is a Republican and

Schrader and Bernard are Democrats.

And as this issue of the Labor Press was going to press, the **Board of Clark County Commissioners** in Washington was going to consider an anti-CRC resolution almost identical to the one that failed in Clackamas County. Like Clackamas County, the resolution was submitted through the back door.

The Columbian newspaper reported that newly-elected Commissioner David Madore, a Republican, asked for the agenda item via an e-mail to County Administrator Bill Barron a day after the Board of Commissioners had met in a public session. Fellow Commissioner Tom Mielke, a Republican, agreed to add the item to the agenda after being contacted by Barron.

In a Feb. 7 e-mail, Commissioner Steve Stuart, a Democrat, confirmed it. "I was informed by the county administrator that the county commissioners will consider a resolution opposing the Columbia River Crossing Project next Tuesday (Feb. 12) morning."

Stuart said the resolution, "was not discussed in open public session yesterday, but instead delivered in an e-mail from Commissioner Madore this morning followed up by a second vote given by Commissioner Mielke over the phone with our administrator, who agreed to add it (to the agenda).

"Regardless of your feelings about the CRC project, please know that I believe the public should be duly notified of, and invited to participate in, public business such as this," Stuart wrote. "Trying to sneak things by doesn't help establish public trust."

In January, the Board of Commissioners, led by Madore, voted 2-to-1 to withdraw more than \$100,000 in fund-

ing to the Columbia River Economic Development Council because of its support for the Columbia River Crossing project.

Neither of the county resolutions has any effect on the CRC project, as it doesn't fall under their governing authority. "The county commission has no legal authority over this interstate project. Period," Stuart told the Columbian newspaper.

## ...Postal contracts

(From Page 2)

November 2014, and 1 percent in November 2015. It also provides for the payment of seven COLAs between now and 2016, though the two COLAs calculated in 2013 will be deferred and paid in 2014. These wage and COLA provisions follow the wage pattern established by the negotiated APWU contract and the arbitrated Rural Letter Carriers' contract.

The arbitration board increased employee health insurance premiums, banned contracting out, and maintained no layoff protections.

For Letter Carriers, transitional employee positions were eliminated and new city carrier assistants (CCAs) positions were created. CCAs will receive lower hourly pay to start, but will have a path to career employment and the top step wage rate after 12.4 years (\$27.74 per hour). CCAs also will be eligible for health care insurance and a 401(k) retirement plan after one year on the job.

The arbitration decision also calls for the conversion of all part-time flexible carriers to full-time regular status.



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## Local Motion

### January 2013

A list of Oregon and Southwest Washington workplaces deciding whether to be union-represented – as reported by the National Labor Relations Board and the Oregon Employment Relations Board.

### Voting in union elections

No unionization elections were held in January 2013 for Oregon or SW Washington.

### Requesting a union election

Workplace (Location) Union	Number of workers in unit
Dotty's Deli (Beaverton) Bakers Local 114	4
Options for Southern Oregon (Grants Pass) SEIU Local 503 <b>DECERT</b>	22
Wilhelm Trucking mechanics (Portland) Machinists District Lodge W24 <b>DECERT</b>	2

#### LEGEND

**DECERT** : A decertification election occurs when some union-represented workers declare that the union no longer has majority support. A 'yes' vote is a vote for the union.