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## There's still light at the end of the ... bridge

The Columbia River Crossing Coalition, a broad group of businesses, labor, ports, community groups, and individuals, has sent letters to Oregon Gov. John Kitzhaber and Washington Gov. John Inslee asking them to support a "phased option" of the CRC project.

The \$3.5 billion I-5 bridge replacement and freeway improvement project was declared dead a month ago after Washington's Republican-controlled Senate refused to allow a vote on their \$450 million portion of the project.

Earlier this year, Oregon lawmakers passed a bill committing \$450 million, but the money was dependent on Washington contributing an equal amount. Other funding for the bridge and light rail system was to come from the federal government and bridge tolls.

The CRC Coalition is now proposing a scaled down version at a cost of \$2.75 billion. The phased option would replace the bridge, connect light rail, and improve Hayden Island and Marine Drive interchanges in Oregon.

Nothing would happen on the Washington side of the Columbia River until funding becomes available.

The CRC Coalition said federal partners would continue to pay for light rail, bridge users (tolls) would pay for the replacement bridge, landings and improvements to Washington's SR 14, and Oregon's state funds would improve interchanges in Oregon.

The CRC Coalition's letter to the governor reads in part: "We feel strongly that while there is still a window of time to receive federal support, we cannot afford to walk away from thousands of hours of public involvement and community leadership on both sides of the river, reams of technical data, a completed federal environmental review process, and an investment of 175 million taxpayer dollars, without exhausting every possibility."

The letter includes more than three pages of names, including Tom Chamberlain, president of the Oregon AFL-CIO; John Mohlis, executive secretary of the Oregon State Building Trades Council; his counterpart in Washington, Dave Myers; Jodi Guetzloe Parker, executive secretary of the Columbia Pacific BCTC; and Shannon Walker, president of the Southwest Washington Central Labor Council, among others.

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