

Activists Decry 12 Lane Bridge Expansion

continued ▲ from Front

Fuglister, who said that she wants to make sure that people have plenty of choices for how they commute, including car pooling and mass transit. "We need to think a lot more about the people side."

Jeri Williams, a longtime environmental justice advocate who served on river crossing task force said that she repeatedly raised concerns about how the influx of traffic would affect air quality in north and northeast Portland, but was ignored or drowned out. She also worries that more cars will affect water runoff.

"They just got quiet and told you 'we'll tell you later,'" said Williams of how her concerns were responded to.

Fuglister and Williams also claim that the task force met in Vancouver at hours that were inconvenient for most north Portlanders and that the task force voted on the proposal before the public comment period had ended.

Hal Dengerink who co-chaired the task force denied in an e-mail that Williams' concerns were drowned out or that meetings were held at inconvenient locations. He was silent on the claim that the taskforce voted on the proposal before the public comment period was over.

Sylvia Evans, a longtime environmental justice advocate from inner north Portland, is



Environmental concerns over the proposed 12 lane I-5 Portland-Vancouver bridge drew opponents to a downtown Portland rally on Sunday.

PHOTO BY JAKE THOMAS/THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

also concerned about 12 lanes. "It will render that neighborhood uninhabitable," she said of the proposed bridge's effect. "I don't think my health or my neighbors' is worth sacrificing for someone else's privilege to live, work, and play in two dif-

ferent states." According to Carley Francis, Columbia River Crossing public information officer, 55 percent of drivers crossing the bridge during daylight hours have Washington tags. Ten percent were trucks and 32 per-

cent of the vehicles were from Oregon. Portland Mayor Sam Adams, who led the council to support the 12-lane option, is quick to point out that he lives just blocks from the freeway. He defends the 12-lane bridge pro-

posal saying that cars spew out more emissions when they're idling in gridlocked traffic. More lanes, Adams argues, would improve the flow of traffic resulting in fewer pollution emissions. He also argues that with the area's population

quickly expanding, Portland could wind up with gridlocked traffic in downtown if steps aren't taken to ease the flow of traffic, and adding that the 12-lane option could bring light rail to Vancouver.

Adams also points out that the Columbia River Crossing decision had the blessing of a Community and Environmental Justice Group. Further, he said that a representative from DEQ will be on the overseeing committee as well as a counterpart from Washington state, negating the need for the health and environmental justice advocates proposed by Fritz.

However, Fuglister, who holds a master's in environmental science, is still worried that the 12 lanes will put enough tailpipes on the freeway to significantly pump more toxics into the neighborhoods that line it.

Additionally, Fuglister, Williams, and Fritz allege that the Columbia Crossing group's environmental justice representatives were cherry picked because they lacked expertise in environmental justice issues.

Fritz adds that health and environmental justice advocates are needed in the next phase of the planning.

The Columbia River Crossing is a very complex project and won't be finished until 2018 or later, and it could be how it might be modified in the meantime.

Crisis Team

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Officers can't," said Officer Marci Jackson, who is the coordinator of the program.

One of the unique features of the program is that it provides culturally competent support for people in crisis.

Often times victims are more comfortable dealing with some-

one who from their own cultural background, rather than uniformed officers. The crisis response team is divided to provide specific services for north and northeast Portland's African-American community, sexual minorities, Hispanic, and the Asian communities.

"Even if you have the best intentions, you can still offend

people," said Pastor Robin Wisner, a CRT volunteer. He explained that different cultures have different ways of grieving, and it's important to have someone culturally competent to help people through times of crisis.

The crisis team volunteers perform a variety of duties. They act as liaisons between the police and families, notify families that a traumatic event has happened, assist with referrals to victims assistance

programs as well as funeral and counseling services, provide translation services, and other duties.

John Canda, a longtime gang outreach worker, said that his work is greatly complemented by the CRT, and said that there is no other organization, public or private, that provides similar services.

CRT volunteers have also helped diffuse volatile situations in the past, by using

community connections that uniformed officers often lack. These are often an invaluable asset.

At last week's meeting, volunteers brought up a Low Riders car show several years that almost erupted into a riot had it not been for CRT volunteers. Fights were breaking out everywhere and CRT volunteers diffused the situation by going into the crowd and using their connections to get people in the crowd to disperse.

"We know the grandparents, we know the cousins, we know the uncles. It's a different level of respect," said April Murchinson, a CRT volunteer, describing her interaction with neighbors who often are reluctant to speak with officers.

At the meeting, several volunteers noted that gang violence is on the rise making it particularly important to have police liaisons like crisis response in the community.

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