

## **IN OUR OPINIONS:**

### **MANAGING MOBILITY**

#### **The way forward across the Columbia**

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### **MANAGING MOBILITY**

A new Interstate 5 bridge across the Columbia River is about more than the number of lanes or new transit service or tolls. It's also an opportunity to show ourselves and the nation a smarter way forward.

We must build a new bridge, but the right kind of bridge. And the right bridge must include a new cross-river partnership that actively manages daily mobility to get the most out of our investment.

The Portland-Vancouver area is poised to seize a unique opportunity as we plan for a new Columbia River Crossing. The project is one of great importance --and unprecedented magnitude --in Washington and Oregon.

As local elected officials in the two states linked by the project, we're joined in the following proposal by Metro President David Bragdon, Vancouver City Councilor Tim Leavitt and Clark County Commissioner Steve Stuart. All of us have participated in years of planning for the new crossing, and each of us welcomes the benefits that it will bring to our community.

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.

With that in mind, we have a proposal for consideration by the community and the individual elected bodies giving us guidance. The idea takes us beyond decisions on lanes and construction to a time when the new bridge is open and our communities can assess how it functions within a larger system. We acknowledge that to the casual observer, this proposal is an unusual step, but our region has always been home to innovation.

So we liken this new cross-river partnership to a thermostat. You wouldn't build a home heating and cooling system without a way to regulate the airflow and control the temperature based on the time of day, outside conditions and who's using what rooms.

Nor should we build a new freeway bridge without a mechanism to adjust conditions for maximum efficiency. Just as you would at home, we'll define the "comfort zone" for the new Columbia River Crossing.

Before adjusting the thermostat, we need to build the house. Along with other members of the CRC Project Sponsors Council, we are scheduled to make a decision in March about the number of lanes on the new bridge. We propose that it be built to accommodate up to three add/drop lanes and three through lanes. But these lanes will not be created equal. Our new partnership agreement will determine how the lanes will be phased and managed over time to get the right mix of tolling, HOV or HOT lanes, van pools and transit fare programs to reduce vehicle miles traveled and pollution.

Because our partnership recognizes that these decisions affect more than just the limited I-5 "bridge influence area," we propose to actively assess and manage other impacted areas, including the I-205 river crossing and the Rose Quarter.

The Columbia River Crossing will function differently in 2030 than it does on opening day. Technology will change, as will community needs. We share the belief that a performance-goal-based "thermostat" is the best tool we have to ensure the new bridge meets the needs of current and future citizens.

What we envision as an actively managed crossing, no other jurisdiction in the nation has done. We're determined to blaze a new trail toward smart transportation management and protect our investment for generations to come.

And we look forward to putting our active transportation partnership into action for the benefits of both our communities, now and for future generations.

Sam Adams is mayor of Portland. Royce Pollard is mayor of Vancouver.