

FRIENDS OF



CLARK COUNTY

SMART GROWTH

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www.clarkfriends.org

(360) 695-5570

January 2007

CONGRATULATIONS VAL ALEXANDER

Every year, the YWCA and Clark College honor 8 outstanding women in our community.

Celebrating these 8 women's lives—filled with courage, strength, and determination—is valuable for us all, now and in the future. For girls and women, these empowering stories generate feelings of personal strength, hope and unlimited possibilities.

In the same way, boys and men gain increased respect for women by learning more about their individual contributions and accomplishments, and about the female experience across time.

Women of Achievement are nominated by their admirers and chosen by a panel of previous winners.

You can not imagine how thrilled we are that Val Alexander, a founding member and past President of FoCC is among this year's honorees!

Val was nominated by Kelly Puntenev, an FoCC board member. Thank you Kelly!

The Women of Achievement will be honored during a sellout lunch event on March 6 2007 at the Vancouver Hilton. To make a reservation, contact Krista Liles at 360.906.4301. Tell Krista you want to be seated among Val's many admirers.

See you there!

**YWCA & CLARK COLLEGE
2007 WOMEN OF ACHIEVEMENT**

FRIENDS of CLARK COUNTY

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MISSION STATEMENT

Friends of Clark County is a nonprofit, membership-based organization creating, educating and empowering advocates for Smart Growth.

Our mission is to conserve and protect Southwest Washington's quality of life.

FoCC MEMBERSHIP

Please join/renew your membership using the order form in this newsletter. We need your support to help cover the costs of our meetings, newsletters, public forums, research and to continue our vital work protecting your quality of life in Clark County.

**2005
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**COLUMBIA RIVER CROSSING
TASK FORCE**

by Carolyn Stewart

The 39-member Columbia River Crossing (CRC) Task Force is a cross section of Washington and Oregon communities interested in the project; public agencies, businesses, civic organizations, neighborhoods, freight, commuter, and environmental groups.

They act as an advisory body to the project's sponsors, led by the Oregon and Washington Departments of Transportation.

Since March 2006, project staff have met with almost 4,000 people, dozens of neighborhood associations and a wide variety of business and community groups to gather ideas to improve the I-5 river crossing, transit, congestion and safety.

Using input received from all of these events, the project team reduced the number of ideas being considered and then combined them into alternative packages for testing.

One of the project's public involvement efforts has been to connect to the neighborhoods in the project area. The Community and Environmental Justice Group was formed in August 2006 to ensure communities affected by the project have meaningful opportunities to provide input.

The options being studied by the Task Force are narrowing. Currently the Task Force is gathering public feedback on the Staff Report (next page). The next step after Task Force approval would be completion of a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS).

A DEIS is a requirement for federally funded projects and details the process through which a transportation project was developed, with consideration of the benefits and impacts of a range of reasonable alternatives, and compliance with environmental regulations.

The Task Force emphasized that the action in late November is not an endorsement, or approval of the staff recommendation.

Projected to cost a whopping \$2 billion to build, and currently costing \$1 million a month to plan, the proposal on the table is to get rid of the old bridges and replace them with one huge span (next page).

The group will take action to consider the results of community discussions on Feb. 27, 2007, at ODOT, 123 NW Flanders St., Portland. Task Force meetings include a public comment portion and members of the community are always invited.

COMUMBIA RIVER CROSSING STAFF REPORT

by Carolyn Stewart

The purpose of the Columbia River Crossing (CRC) project is to improve safety, reliability and mobility on Interstate 5 across the Columbia River and between State Route 500 in Vancouver and Columbia Boulevard in Portland.

At the last CRC Task Force meeting November 29th, staff proposed that one river crossing and two transit options be advanced into the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) process.

With the recommendation, staff proposes to eliminate options that would retain the existing Interstate Bridges.

The new bridge would accommodate all types of vehicular travel using five or six lanes in each direction, and improve the bicycle and pedestrian path. The design would be high enough to eliminate the lift span for river traffic and low enough to avoid the airspace of Pearson Air Park.

The options are combined into three alternatives:

- Replacement bridge and bus rapid transit with express bus service from suburban Clark County to downtown Portland.
- Replacement bridge and light rail with express bus service from suburban Clark County to downtown Portland
- No action. A "no action" (or "no build") alternative is required for any DEIS process as a baseline for comparison with other alternatives.

An analysis of all river crossing and transit options show the recommended options performed better on nearly all criteria adopted by the CRC Task Force for decision-making. These options also meet the project's objectives as articulated in the Purpose and Need Statement and Problem Definition.

For more information contact us at 503-256-2726 or 360-737-2726, visit our website at www.columbiarivercrossing.org or email us at feedback@columbiarivercrossing.org.

- Listen to our podcast on our website;
- Join a monthly email update - and pass it on! Subscribe to future email updates;
- Host an I-5 Bridge Chat: Do you have a group that would be interested in a discussion with project staff? Then host an I-5 Bridge Chat. You provide the place, the guests and the questions. We provide the project staff and the answers.
- Ask questions! Email or call us: 1-866-396-2726 or feedback@columbiarivercrossing.org

CRC OPEN HOUSES

When the CRC Task Force received the recommendations of project staff on bridge and public transit options in November, they agreed that staff should hold community discussions on the proposal during the time leading up to their February 2007 meeting.

Lora Caine, President of FoCC represents Clark county citizenes on the task force. Read her concerns about the staff report beginning on page 4.

Attend an open house to learn about the alternatives proposed for study in 2007. Submit your comments at the open houses or send them in before February 16 to be included in the public comment report provided to the Task Force.

Open houses are scheduled for:

Wednesday, January 17, 2007

5:30 p.m. – 7:30 p.m.

Battle Ground Police Department
507 SW 1st Street
Battle Ground, WA

Saturday, January 20, 2007

9:30 a.m. - 1 p.m.

Lincoln Elementary School
4200 Daniels Street
Vancouver, WA

Thursday, January 25, 2007

4:30 p.m. - 7:30 p.m.

Oregon Association of Minority
Entrepreneurs (OAME)
4134 N Vancouver Avenue
(at Skidmore Street)
Portland, OR

Tuesday, January 30th, 2007

6:30 pm – 8:30 pm

12050 N. Jantzen Drive
next to Hayden Island Safeway
Portland, OR

CRC OPINIONS

The Columbia River Crossing Task Force has been meeting to discuss options for a long time. Our President, Lora Caine, is a task force member representing the citizens of Clark County.

The options under consideration are narrowing. What are the implications for our health and our neighborhoods? What sort of economic impacts can we expect? What can we really afford? What other ideas should be considered?

Opinions differ, and in the column at right Lora writes about a concern several on the CRC Task Force share. What do you think?

There is a schedule of CRC Open Houses on page 3 of this newsletter.

DISCUSSION MEETING

The agenda for monthly FoCC board meetings is always crowded. Due to lack of time, every month an important topic for discussion gets held over for the next meeting.

We found a solution!

Now we get together to have a monthly discussion meeting (and a great dinner), and you're invited!

Wednesday, March 28, 2007

6:30—8:00 PM

SUN ROOM

at the Salmon Creek BurgerVille

We invite you to join a lively discussion. We'll always have one or two issues to discuss, but we'll leave time to talk about your concerns too. Join us!

COLUMBIA RIVER CROSSING OPTIONS

by Lora Caine

BASICALLY ONE OPTION TO CROSS THE COLUMBIA RIVER

As a member of the Columbia River Crossing (CRC) Task Force I realize that we are approaching an important crossroads in the process. In February we will be voting on what options should be included in the deeper analysis for the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS).

This project is massively complex.

A huge amount of data has been gathered and in-depth studies have been completed to get to this point. The project staff has been diligent and, frankly, has made a compelling case for their recommendations.

However, I am not ready to make a decision to support the staff when the option recommended is just basically one option—a replacement bridge. The staff broke it down to two options by giving each replacement bridge a different Transit service.

I would like to see another option—an arterial or supplemental bridge that leaves intact the old bridges. My reason for not supporting a single option study is that there has been no cost/benefit analysis done yet. The costs will be forthcoming when rigorous and detailed studies are prepared.

When only one option is studied, how can you tell if it is the most cost effective without studying another option or two in that same fine detail?

Yes, there are pros and cons to all the options proposed so far.

- A replacement bridge could be huge and costly.
- It could open up a lot more capacity, thus spurring even more rapid growth than we have now in Clark County.
- But it also could alleviate the predicted long range traffic problems and help freight mobility, too.

An extra bridge has some definite shortcomings. Among them:

- More traffic could impact downtown Vancouver.
- There may be problems with the marine channel safety.
- The capacity would be less than on the replacement bridge proposal.
- There could be a major cost to retro-fit the old bridges for earthquake safety.

Continued on page 9

BUYER BEWARE

By Bridget Schwarz

Consumers are made, not born.

Your shopping choices give financial support to the policies and practices of the retailers where you shop.

In less than two decades, large retail chains have become the most powerful corporations in America. The economic benefits for these mega-retailers fueled that enormous growth.

But where are the economic benefits for our community? For every dollar you spend at these retail giants about 85% leaves our community and goes back to corporate headquarters. For every dollar spent at a local business, over 50% goes back to our local economy.

Where are the economic benefits for our local government? The precipitous drop in locally owned businesses makes the increase in sales tax revenue illusory.

Results of a recent study are quoted by both proponents and opponents of big box retailers. It shows on average a net increase of only 6 low paying minimal benefits jobs result from new mega-retailers entering the market place. That's because jobs are lost from local companies paying higher wages and better benefits that go out of business.

Of the 24 states that report statistics (including Washington), full time employees of the world's largest retailer are the biggest users of state (taxpayer) funded health care services.

Finally, do not overlook the connection between a store's low prices and how they cut costs. Employees at many national retailers earn poverty wages with no benefits and sell products that were made by exploited workers overseas.

Many believe that, especially for national retail chains, profit making has deteriorated into greed. The implications of your shopping choices are many. Low prices come at a high cost. Independent businesses are in a precipitous decline. *Use your buying power wisely - it has community and worldwide impacts.*

KOOB DOOG A *

Stacy Mitchell is the senior researcher for the Institute for Local Self-Reliance (www.ilsr.org). Her new Beacon Press book, Big Box Swindle, details the true cost of mega-retailers and the fight for America's independent businesses.

Her book makes the case that the takeover of these absentee owner businesses are behind many of our most pressing local problems. Among them:

- Rising poverty rates;
- The shrinking middle class;
- Increased pollution;
- Soaring gasoline consumption;
- Failing family farms;
- Diminished civic engagement;
- Declining voter levels;
- The role of government policy.

Her book contains examples of how local communities and businesses are effectively fighting back.

* *OK, that's a good book spelled backwards.*

CLICK HERE *

On January 8, 2007 the Los Angeles Alliance for a New Economy (LAANE) released a report on Wal Mart and the future of urban America.

It is called WalMart and Beyond: The Battle for Good Jobs and Strong Communities in Urban America.

The report documents the extensive negative impacts of WalMart and offers many good examples of community based strategies that strengthen our local economies.

* <http://www.laane.org/walmart>

FALL FUND RAISER

Friends would like to thank everyone for supporting our fall fund raiser.

On November 17, 2006. a delicious meal and good fun was had by all!

Our silent auction proceeds will help cover the costs of our efforts to protect Clark County's quality of life.

Our special thanks to:

Val Alexander & Kelly Lindgren
John Aschim
Ron & Nettie Barca
John Bishop
Pam Brokaw
Lora Caine
Don & Sue Cannard
Elizabeth Cook
Terry Cornelius
Bev Doty
Dick Dyrland
Holly & Nick Forrest
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Linda & Rick Sant'Angelo
Michael Shepherd
Judie Stanton
Gretchen Starke
George & Nancy Vartanian
Madeleine Von Laue
Linda & Brian Wolfe

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

By Lora Caine

Are we prepared for the future? Have we planned for our needs? And yet...are we pack rats?

I have a father who *is* one. He once came home with a hefty set of landing gear wheels saying he needs them for someday when he builds his own personal helicopter. He never did, but he sure was ready. Did he consider that he could buy the parts at the time he planned to build the copter? Nope. Nevertheless he was overly ready for that someday to come.

Is the County heading in an "overly ready" direction? The County's latest preferred alternative proposal to add 19.4 square miles to our urban growth area is a "helicopter" waiting to be built. Yes, someday that amount will be needed. When? Is that someday in the next 5 years—or 30 years? Do we really need to stockpile the land now?

Currently land can be added when 75% of the vacant buildable land within the current urban growth area is used up. It's simple—use up the land, then expand.

The latest proposal to expand did not come because the 75% threshold had been met. The growth industry did not like the previous expanded growth area plan—it was just not enough land for them.

If you expand too quickly, you guarantee that you'll grow rapidly. It becomes a "build it and they will come" scenario.

Adding more land on the outer edges of the growth area means less desire to fill in the land that has already been set aside for growth.

Of course rapid expansion may be desirable to some in the growth industry but for the rest of the community, it means our quality of life will suffer. Rapid growth causes crowded schools, inadequate police force and firefighters, traffic congestion on roadways and a continuation as Portland's bedroom community.

The increased tax monies, collected from the new growth, do not come in time and are not enough to handle the infrastructure needs that rapid growth brings.

The state's Office of Financial Management gives the County a range of population estimates for their growth planning process. The current County Commissioners chose a high-end population estimate, which supports the need for a larger expansion of the urban growth area.

continued on next page

CAN WE BE 'OVERLY READY'

by Lora Caine

continued from previous page

They should take the conservative approach, like their predecessors, and limit the growth to the low-end population estimate. More land can always be added when the need arises.

The need is not here yet. It is up to the community to continue reminding the County Commissioners that they should not grow any faster than the County can afford to grow. The "helicopter wheels" can wait in the rural lands until it is time to build.

COLUMBIA RIVER CROSSING OPTIONS

continued from page 4

An extra bridge has some definite shortcomings. Here are some more:

- The old bridges would probably be reduced to two lanes each way to give shoulders on the bridge, thus requiring a fairly large supplemental bridge similar to a replacement bridge.
- Connections to the new bridge could cause quite a "spaghetti" tangle of ramps and lanes, which could impact businesses and neighborhoods adjacent to the freeway.
- The lift spans on the old bridges may cause more and more traffic disruption as marine traffic increases.
- But on the positive side, it may be less costly. It could allow the current usable bridges to function longer into the future.

Nevertheless, to make a wise choice for the final recommendation, the Task Force needs all the information it can get. Therefore, the CRC Task Force should require at least a second option for staff to do more detailed analysis.

CRC FORUM

We are pleased to have a link to a lively panel discussion of the January 4th Columbia River Crossing Forum. Several questions and concerns about the project are included in the 20 minute long podcast.

We thank Jon Devore and Executive Director Andrew Villeneuve, both of the Northwest Progressive Institute, for recording and preparing the podcast. Hear it here:
<http://www.nwprogressive.org/multimedia/audio/events/JAN07ColumbiaForum.html>

COUNTY COMP PLAN UPDATE

After meeting with key staff January 5th, Marty Snell, Director of Clark County Community Planning says that the goal for getting out the new Comprehensive Plan is May 2007.

The new Community Planning Department is charged with developing the Comprehensive Plan. A draft timeline is now in place.

A Capital Facilities Plan (CFP) will be released in late February. The Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) will be released in March.

April will have Planning Commission work sessions, Board work sessions and Joint PC/Board work sessions.

In late April and early May both bodies have deliberations. In mid-May, County Commissioners will schedule public hearings.

This draft schedule, Snell says, lacks a public information component where stakeholder meetings and open houses will be made part of the process. Since one schedule effects the other, firm dates are impossible to predict. *Stay tuned for FoCC Action Alerts!*

FoCC WEBSITE

On our website you'll find:

- the latest updates to our meeting and events calendar;
- background and action items for issues that impact you;
- projects we are working on;
- links to other organizations that share our quality of life goals;
- opportunities to get involved with Friends of Clark County.

Our URL is www.clarkfriends.org

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