



# FOCC E-Mail Newsletter

MAY 21, 2008

SPRING 2008 NEWSLETTER

## Please Note:

**Our new phone number will be: 360-263-2521.**

## FOCC Board

**Val Alexander**

**360-263-2521**

Interim President

**Sydney Reisback**

**360-887-7880**

Vice President

**Lora Caine**

**360-887-4269**

Treasurer

**Linda Wolfe**

**360-546-2015**

Secretary

**Kelly Puntaney**

**Donna Roberge**

## Saying Goodbye to Good Friends for a Little While at Least...

Hello Friends of Clark County Members. It has been a while since we last spoke to you. While we have been busy, it is with sadness that I present the following news. Due to many complications, at a special meeting on March 26, 2008, the Executive Board of Friends of Clark County voted to suspend all major operations until January 2009. While unfortunate, this move was undertaken with the understanding that we had no choice in the matter. Our executive board has always been the life blood of our organization, but too many conflicts affected Board members this year. Because of this we were forced to consider the possibility that should we try to maintain operations, we would lose the experience and dedication that currently permeates your volunteer board on Friends of Clark County.

On a brighter side, we want you all to know that this suspension of activities is limited. While we will not be providing regular newsletters and we will not be meeting officially as a board for the rest of 2008, all of the board members have stated their intentions to maintain the work that must be ongoing in this period of time. We will maintain our website so that you can still check up on things as the year progresses. While the phone is currently in the process of being moved, it will be back up and running with a new number: 360-263-2521.. The commitments we've made to regional task forces and other organizations will continue to have our support during this hiatus. Please know, that board members currently involved with each of these tasks will continue to participate as much as possible until the new year. We hope to have a jam-packed newsletter for you in the 2009 with all the new and interesting updates.

We also want you to know, that there have been changes to the board make up. Our executive director position was not one we could maintain over the duration of this time off. There were conflicts of interest, time and money that just made this former position unviable in the 2008 year. Despite this sad fact, we offer many thanks to our Former Executive Director Bridget Schwarz. Her work and effort over the last three years has been unmatched throughout the state. We wish her well in her future endeavors and we ask that you thank her when you see her for her time and dedication to this county.

This specific newsletter is dedicated to our executive board and former staff members. I want to thank them all for the service they provide for us and for our community. It's important for our members to know just how much we appreciate all the things that our volunteers do to bring the right kind of news to you at times when it is most needed. As a non-profit our mission really is about educating the public on things they may not know enough about. Things that could have a dramatic impact on their way of life. With this in mind, I don't think you could be in better hands than that of your executive board. If this organization didn't exist, things would be inevitably a lot different here in our County.

Also, I as president will be stepping down after my brief tenure as the head of your board. This was unforeseen on my part. I had hoped to work with the board on many future goals in 2009. However, with my workload, new child and school beckoning, I can no longer provide the time that a good president needs to get our wonderful organization ready for the future. I have no worries that someone more capable than I will take my place in the months ahead. I offer my thanks and my

best wishes in the upcoming year to that person and to the rest of you. With that I will leave you to the wonderful and educational updates we wanted to provide you one last time before our long break. Good luck in the New Year!!!

Sincerely,  
Andrew Ness  
(Former) President of Clark County

## **Friends of Clark County Joins in Celebrating 20 Years of Metropolitan Greenspaces and Renewed Commitment to “Connecting Green”**

By Kelly Puntenev

Nearly 25 years ago, citizens from all over the region and all walks of life recognized the need to preserve our metropolitan greenspaces for the good of future generations. The group represented a diverse range of interests but worked together to urge the creation of a regional approach to funding parks.

In April 1988, with a budget of \$32,500, Metro launched an effort to inventory all parks, natural areas and tree canopy in the greater metropolitan region; to project future parks and recreation needs; and to create a user-friendly park information system. In 1992 a Greenspaces Master Plan calling for the creation of a *Cooperative Regional System of Natural Areas, Open Space, Trails, and Greenways for Wildlife and People* was adopted. The plan included elements focused on Vancouver and Clark County.

Subsequently, two bond measures totaling \$363 million were approved by the Portland region's voters. The needs of Vancouver-Clark County became funded in part by passage of a conservation real estate excise taxes, park impact fees, and a successful vote to establish the Metropolitan Park District in the unincorporated urban area. These accomplishments have allowed us on the north side of the river to make a difference by acquiring much needed natural areas, parks and trails.

This past June the *Connecting Green* initiative set a far-reaching goal: to create the world's greatest park system serving the Portland-Vancouver metropolitan region.

Over 200 park, trail and natural areas advocates gathered on April 23, 2008 at the Bridgeport Brewpub in Portland to celebrate the past quarter-century's successes and look forward to the future. Taking active part in the event were regional and local park providers, elected officials including Commissioner Steve Stuart and City Councilman Tim Leavitt, VCPR Commissioners, Friends of Clark County representatives, and many pioneers of the early days of park planning in the metropolitan region. They gathered to celebrate a rich history and launch the next century's park, trail and natural area planning.

To learn more about the *Connecting Green* initiative and take an active role in the organization's efforts, please email [mikehouck@urbangreenspaces.org](mailto:mikehouck@urbangreenspaces.org).

*“Several Board members attended the last Greenspaces meeting on April 23, 2008. This looks to be one of the very best things we're currently involved in. It's a chance to change the face of our community for the better, and we're excited about our participation and support of this organization.”*

*-Andrew Ness*

# HOW SHOULD WE CROSS THE COLUMBIA RIVER ON I-5?

By Lora Caine

## First things first

The Columbia River Crossing (CRC) Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) is available at: <http://www.columbiarivercrossing.org/>

The focus of the project is for the movement of freight, motorists, bicyclists, transit riders and pedestrians. The study had to address the impacts of two airports (their airspace), two international marine ports (including boats and ship navigation safety), three state highways, six interchanges and several major arterial roadways. For the current bridges, seismic safety and costs to retrofit were considered. Five alternatives were studied in the DEIS. A wealth of ideas, opinions and studies from people and experts on both sides of the river, has gone into the process and decision making. In the end, there are no easy answers.

## How the Friends of Clark County Board stands on the issue:

Since 1999, *Friends of Clark County* (FoCC) has represented the environmental community on both the Trade Partnership study and CRC Project task forces. Information from the various studies was analyzed to help the FoCC Board understand the issues. We, as the Board, support a project that minimizes environmental impacts including a climate smart solution. The project should amend safety problems, support connectivity and improve bicycle and pedestrian movement. The majority on the Board also supports light rail as an overall and long term high capacity transportation option for enhancing the greater community.

## Still more questions and concerns?

We recognize that there are some in the community who still have concerns about this complicated issue. We encourage further study but will address a few of the questions and concerns repeatedly brought to the CRC task force.

## **Why didn't the CRC group decide upon a third bridge located away from the I-5 corridor?**

The bulk (75%) of the traffic gets on and/or off in the five mile area of the project between SR 500 and Columbia Blvd. Three areas were studied for a third bridge: downstream at the railroad bridge area, between the I-5 and I-205 bridges and Camas/Washougal area. The railroad bridge area would take some traffic off I-5 but not enough to warrant the cost to build in that area. (Note: It could also be said that a bridge in that area will help with the commute to the Beaverton/Hillsboro area thus reinforcing the bedroom community label Clark County is fighting.) The bridge between the bridges would interrupt two airports and have no connecting freeways on either side of the river for the traffic to go to. And lastly, a Camas/Washougal bridge will not address I-5 traffic. For your information, more bridges across the Columbia are being considered for future projects by the Regional Transportation Council. The CRC project is the first of many projects to address the needs of a growing region.

**Won't the congestion just be moved further south?** Some, about 25%, of the traffic will pass through the project area thus adding to the traffic to the south in the morning peak commuting times as traffic volume grows. Oregon may plan to address their traffic congestion problems within Portland but that is not the purview of the CRC project. Hooking up with the operating transit system (light rail) in Portland will help with the connection for travelers and commuters from Clark County.

**This project costs billions. Is it worth it?** Whether it is more asphalt lanes, light rail or bus rapid transit to move the people and freight, it will cost over a billion dollars just for the bridge (supplemental or replacement). A third bridge located elsewhere would still be at least that amount. The CRC staff has studied the different options for high capacity transit (commuter rail, bus, bus rapid transit, and light rail) and found that in the long run, light rail will be less cost than bus rapid transit while transporting more people (a major goal of the project).

FOCC board supports a climate smart solution.

3<sup>rd</sup> bridge?

## Why light rail?

**Is it right for our taxes to be used to subsidize light rail?** All transportation options are subsidized by our taxes. Asphalt lanes on freeways and roadways are paid outright by taxes and development fees. Bus and other transit options have user fees to help pay for the costs. Tolling may be used to supplement the funds gathered to build and maintain the new bridge and rapid transit.

**Why does it seem to be a done deal for light rail?** Many years of deeply detailed study (including taking pictures of license plates to see where the cars travel to and from) have brought many business and community leaders to the conclusion that light rail is the best answer to a multimodal transportation system. However, the staff and task force are there as recommending bodies to the policy makers who will make the final decision. (See the DEIS for a list of the 31 Agencies and Tribes involved with the project).

**But it seems like Oregon is dictating that only light rail will be accepted. Is that correct?** Opinions (pro or con) have been stated by people on both sides of the river. Until votes are taken by the policy makers nothing has really been officially decided.

**The tolls will be paid mostly by Washington commuters. Why can't the Oregon income tax be used to cover some of the costs?** The CRC staff and task force have no power to tell the Oregon Legislature to earmark the income tax paid by Washingtonians to go to the CRC project. If tolls are used, they will be paid by commuters, freight movers and all others traveling across the bridge—basically tolling is a user fee.

**Why build anything at all? Wouldn't a build-up of traffic finally get people out of their cars and into buses thus reducing car exhaust pollution?** The buses use the same lanes as other vehicles do today. The no-build solution omits any new transit options. As population and business growth continues into the future, the buses will be slowed in increased traffic congestion as well. As vehicles idle, there are more carbon dioxide emissions. By building a new bridge to include high capacity lanes, people can make choices to drive or ride. The more people in transit, the less cars on the road and therefore less traffic thus helping freight movement and leaving more room for those who cannot use rapid transit. Carbon dioxide emissions, for the no-build option, are more than building a replacement bridge and less than adding a supplemental bridge.

**Isn't there a crime safety problem with Light Rail?** Adequate security is a must for not just light rail but with bus and bus rapid transit transportation and stations.

## Our Schedule for the Summer

As Interim President, I want to assure our members that we will be available to answer any questions you may have. We appreciate greatly all who contributed to our fundraiser in February and at other times. That money allows us to keep our website open and get out this newsletter, as well as meeting all our other financial obligations. The board will be back in action in January, 2009, unless we need to regroup sooner, such as helping promote the Legacy Lands Proposal if it's to be part of the November elections. We are all continuing our work on the other projects as well, such as Greenspaces, Columbia River Crossing, Comprehensive Plan Appeal, and habitat preservation. If any other issues emerge that needs our attention, we will respond.

Have a great summer, and don't forget the John Muir picnic, August 23<sup>rd</sup>. Time and place will be on our website, [www.clarkfriends.org](http://www.clarkfriends.org).

Val

**Remember, we as a board are trying to switch to electronic newsletters both to protect our environment and to cut down the costs of providing information to you on a regular basis. Please make sure we have your correct email address.**

**FOCC  
Advisory  
Board**

**Milada Allen**

**Kerri Altom**

**Ron Barca**

**Terry Cornelius**

**Bill Dygert**

**Dennis Dykes**

**Mary Higgins**

**Mike Houck**

**Tom  
Koenninger**

**David  
Mcdonald**

**Craig  
Pridemore**

**Ila Stanek**

**Judie Stanton**

**Cathy Steiger**

**Jeanette  
Steinhauer**

**George  
Vartanian**

# Futurewise Appeals Growth Plan

Val Alexander, Interim President

Over the last several years, the Clark County Commissioners have worked to revise the 2004 Comprehensive plan adding more than 4000 acres of farmland to the urban growth boundaries. The new plan would cost the taxpayers enormous amounts of money to extend infrastructure such as roads, schools, sewer and water supplies and destroy huge amounts of our resource lands and habitat, not to mention the cost of the revision in terms of staff time, new studies, and legal expense.

Friends of Clark County worked continuously during this time preparing comments on the EIS, notifying landowners, testifying and holding forums to involve public participation.

The commissioners voted to approve their preferred alternative last fall and this plan was appealed by John Karpinski of Clark County Natural Resources and Futurewise, a statewide growth management advocacy group with a legal staff. They appealed to the Western Washington Growth Management Hearings Board on the basis that the "no action" alternative was not truly a no action choice, since the population projection was raised significantly thus allowing a huge increase in the urban growth boundaries. They also cited inadequate public involvement and the inaccuracy of the Globalwise study that was used to define farmland. The Hearing on the Merits (not a public hearing) in Vancouver on April 8<sup>th</sup>, involved 2 Growth Management Hearings Board members, recorders, attorneys from the county, cities and private interests, and Keith Scully from Futurewise representing Futurewise and Clark County Natural Resources. I attended all day, as well as Lora Caine in the afternoon. It was interesting to watch and curious that outside of one or two other people in the audience, no one from the public was there besides Lora and myself. If Futurewise and CCNRC win the appeal, the county will possibly have to revise the EIS, essentially.

## Hearings Board Decision

The Western Washington Growth Management Hearings Board released their decision on May 15<sup>th</sup>. Here is a summary by April Putney of Futurewise:

"The Growth Management Hearings Board issued an order of invalidity on more than 2500 acres of farmland that the County had included in its urban growth areas. This means that more than half of the farmland the County planned to pave over will again be protected from unnecessary sprawling development. Further, the Hearings Board agreed with us that the County's SEPA "no action" and public participation process was inadequate and often unfair, but stopped short of ordering the County to start over. "

This decision is a big win for Clark County residents who are hoping to preserve the farmlands of Clark County for food production and habitat protection. It is likely to be appealed to Superior Court by the county and the special interest groups that have pushed so hard for more land to develop.

The full 87 page decision is available at:

[http://www.gmhb.wa.gov/western/decisions/index.html#2008\\_Cases](http://www.gmhb.wa.gov/western/decisions/index.html#2008_Cases)

Select John Karpinski, Clark County Natural Resources and Futurewise, case # 07-2-0027.

Friends of Clark County, as a 501C-3 organization, does not litigate, but appreciates greatly the work of Futurewise and John Karpinski in protecting the quality of life issues in Clark County.

FRIENDS of CLARK COUNTY P.O. Box 61711  
Vancouver, WA 98660 360.263.2521 www.clarkfriends.org  
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 livability and quality of life. Please join / renew your  
membership with Friends of Clark County to help cover the costs of  
our meetings, public forums, newsletters, research, and to continue  
our vital work in this community. Thank you!

Name (s) :

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Address :

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City, State, Zip :

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E-mail :

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PLEASE NOTE: E-mail is our most effective means of  
communication.  Individual - \$25  Sustaining  
Donor - \$250  Supporter/Organization - \$50  Major  
Donor - \$1,000  Donor - \$100  Other - \$\_\_\_\_\_  
 YES!! Send me a FREE Friends of Clark County baseball cap  
with a paid membership of \$100 or more.  NO?? How about  
a free 6 month membership? Friends of Clark County is a  
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