

Joint Transportation Committee
06/20/2012

Good morning Chair Haugen, Chair Clibborn, esteemed committee members. Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you and I would like to also take this opportunity to welcome you to Southwest Washington.

My name is Paul Montague. I'm President of Identity Clark County. I am also one of the co-chairs of the Clark County Transportation Alliance, representing over 23 sponsoring organizations from throughout Clark County, and I'm one of the managing directors of the Columbia River Crossing Coalition, representing over 450 businesses, associations, unions and individuals on both sides of the Columbia River in support of the Columbia River Crossing.

In my past 11 months as the new President of Identity Clark County, I have developed a much greater awareness of the needs of Southwest Washington. In all of that, two key principles stick out for me that are relevant to today's hearing:

1. Transportation is the lifeblood of commerce.
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2. We can accomplish so much more as a region when we work cooperatively towards those common goals that provide solid benefits for our community as a whole.

Our business community recognizes the value of participating, jointly with other organizations, in groups like the Clark County Transportation Alliance. We recognize that our participation, speaking with one unified voice, helps us get the funding and the tools that we need to build and improve our roads, which gets us to one of our ultimate goals, which is to raise the economic tide for all businesses and residents of Southwest Washington.

The business communities of Vancouver and Clark County have stepped up to the plate numerous times in the past to support funding packages like the Nickel Package, and we have also stepped up to the plate to support past mega projects like the Columbia River Channel Deepening.

Today, we see the results of those efforts throughout Clark County, from the docking of deep draft vessels, and significant new tenants, like BHP Billiton at the Port of Vancouver, to the opening of new corridors of retail and commercial business through the development of new highway interchanges on Southeast 192nd Avenue and the new Ridgefield/I-5 Interchange.

Much like any other community, Southwest Washington has its own vocal minority that is critical of projects like the Columbia River Crossing. (I'm sure there were critics of the original bridge way back in 1917.) But rest assured that Identity Clark County, the Greater Vancouver Chamber of Commerce, the Columbia River Economic Development Council and much of the rest of the business community all support the building of the Columbia River Crossing. Not only will this project be of significance from a national and international perspective, eliminating a significant bottleneck to commerce between Canada and Mexico, this project will be the largest single economic development project in the Vancouver/Portland Region for decades to come, creating thousands of directly related jobs and setting the stage for a much larger economic growth in our region for generations.

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Part of my role at Identity Clark County is to identify all of the potential projects that ICC might champion to forward economic development in our region. As I have met with business and municipal leadership throughout Clark County, one theme has been abundantly clear to me. We need money for our roads. Now, if possible, but definitely sooner rather than later, and the need is significant. I have been told by the folks I have met with that the maintenance needs of our roads are reaching a critical stage, where if not dealt with, costs will shoot up like the end of a hockey stick.

We strongly encourage the development and passage of a comprehensive and robust statewide transportation revenue package to support new transportation projects like the Columbia River Crossing and the new Vancouver Waterfront, and to support the revitalization and maintenance of existing city and county roadways. We strongly support and encourage the development of a package that includes direct funding to our county and cities, or at the very least, gives them more local option funding tools to develop and maintain their roads.

The need for a robust funding package is definitely there, and as we have in the past, Identity Clark County and the Clark County Transportation Alliance stand ready to lead efforts in Southwest Washington to support and pass such a measure if you will help us by moving it through the legislature during the 2013 Legislative Session.

Thank you for your convening here in Clark County and thank you for your time today.