

# A Third Corridor is Integral to the IBRP Discussion

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*This document was written as an outline and starting point for Council discussion with a focus just on the building of a third corridor and the planning of a fourth. The position of the Clark County Council on the Third Corridor can be summarized as shown below. The ideas were initially discussed at Council Time on xxxxxx, followed by a vote taken on xxxxxx in support of the positions highlighted below as well as Resolution 2021-xx-xx .*

## Reduce Traffic Congestion

There is one primary goal associated with the bridge replacement project that rises above various secondary goals, and that is to significantly reduce traffic congestion. Building a third corridor is integral to this discussion, as well as the planning of a fourth corridor. Why not just wait a few years for this discussion until the Interstate Bridge Replacement Project (IBRP) has been seismically retrofitted or totally rebuilt? Because road and street planning moves on within Clark County, and it is essential that expensive actions not be taken that would interfere with or add unnecessary redesign cost to a third corridor in the future. It does not happen rapidly, but rather evolves. A third corridor would be an integrated land use and transportation concept that would affect not just the major arterials but also the type of development and transit service and walkable areas that would surround the regional street system.

## Build a Third Corridor

The IBRP team is likely justified in saying there is no third bridge in its regional transportation plans, and therefore they cannot consider a third bridge option. Thus, this discussion will lead to a resolution that advocates for a third bridge in the regional transportation plans.

Given Portland's reluctance to widen the I-5 significantly, Clark County Council supports repairing or replacing the I-5 bridge for traffic and seismic safety while maintaining all existing I-5 lanes for auto traffic and simultaneously planning now for construction of at least a third corridor across the Columbia for auto traffic. If we kept only the I-5 and I-205 corridors that we currently have, then the entire corridors would need to be widened, including the Rose Quarter area. However, we know that Portland does not want additional lanes at the Rose Quarter, and certainly not ten lanes in each direction at the Rose Quarter by 2060 as some planners suggested, making the building of a third corridor now and planning for a fourth bridge critical.

A logical place to begin this discussion in preparation for a resolution is with the 2008 Regional Transportation Council (RTC) "Visioning Study" because it gives some sense of long-term perspective. In other words, this discussion is not new. Much of the following language is adopted freely from RTC's summary report.

The main purpose of the Visioning Study was to open dialog on the question: "How would we get around within our own community in the longer-term future if our County reaches one million in

population,” recognizing that Clark County’s population growth is outpacing the capacity of its transportation infrastructure. A Steering Committee comprised officials from agency members of the RTC provided policy input, with technical assistance from agency staff in those jurisdictions.

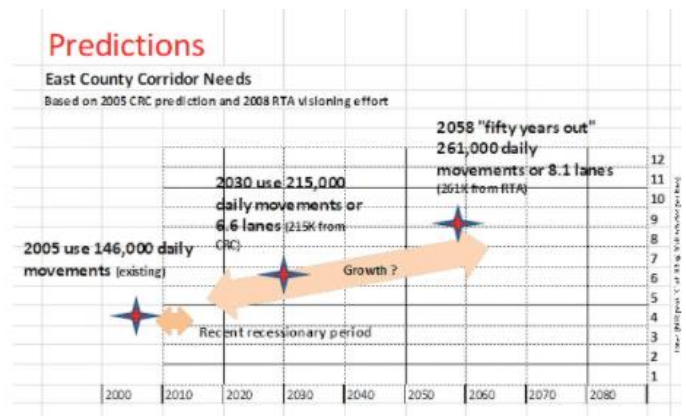
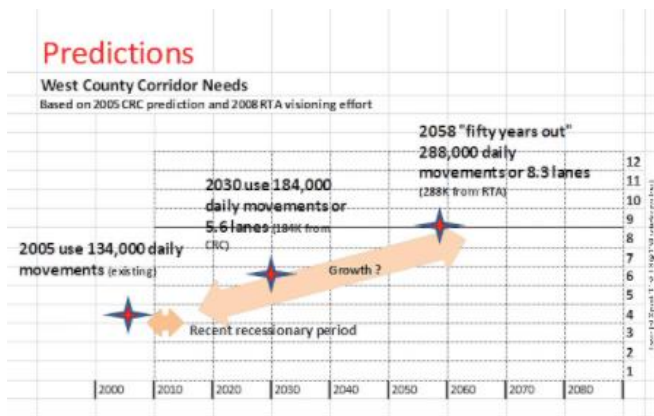
Various screenings were done and in the end, a map showing several potential regional corridors (see below, Exhibit 8 page 35, Visioning Study April 2008) within Clark County as well as four potential new crossings of the Columbia River was presented in detail. RTC concluded on the need for TWO new bridges — one west of I-5 and one east of I-205. In their report they provided two options for each bridge location. For an eastern bridge, the RTC proposed either a crossing from 192nd in Vancouver to 181st in Portland, or alternatively, a crossing from the Camas-Washougal area to Troutdale. Another option they outlined was to connect the Port of Vancouver with the Port of Portland, helping to get 18-wheel freight trucks off I-5 and the Interstate Bridge.

It was interesting that the highest demand linkages were mostly subregional connections, instead of regional corridors. In addition, corridor analysis again resulted in a set of potential new crossings of the Columbia west of I-5, and east of I-205 but not between I-5 and I-205 because of constraints for regional travel posed by PDX. New crossings of the Columbia River had 4-6 lanes with no tolls. This map may be part of a multi-phase effort to identify one or more regional corridors that would be added to the Metropolitan Transportation Plan and local Comprehensive Plans.



## By the Numbers

Transportation architect Kevin Peterson scrutinized CRC traffic project data which came from two Washington studies between 2000 and 2007. He identified that by 2060, there would be the need for 9 lanes in each direction on the I-5 corridor and 8 lanes in each direction on the I-205 corridor. That indicates 17 total lanes would be needed across the Columbia River just 40 years from now. We have 7 today.



A question for regional planners: Do we want all those vehicles to use only two existing transportation corridors? It would seem to make sense to spread the traffic flow across the river among multiple transportation corridors, each serving the needs of different communities.

Portland has a dozen bridges across the Willamette River, over about a 12-mile area. Each serves different communities, and spreads the transportation burden among many smaller transportation corridors. One can only imagine the traffic nightmare if Portland had only two bridges across the Willamette River.

The Portland metropolitan area has two significant bottlenecks which affect Clark County traffic. One is the 2-lane section of I-5 at the Rose Quarter. The other is US 26 and the 3-lane Vista Ridge Tunnel connecting downtown Portland with Beaverton and Hillsboro, which serve Oregon's two largest private employers (Intel & Nike). A western bypass could get around both of these bottlenecks. (See [9 Portland bottlenecks](#).)

The RTC Visioning Study showed 151,000 Clark County households in their "base year", with a projected 230,000 households in 2024, and an estimated 417,000 households at the end of their "50-year study".

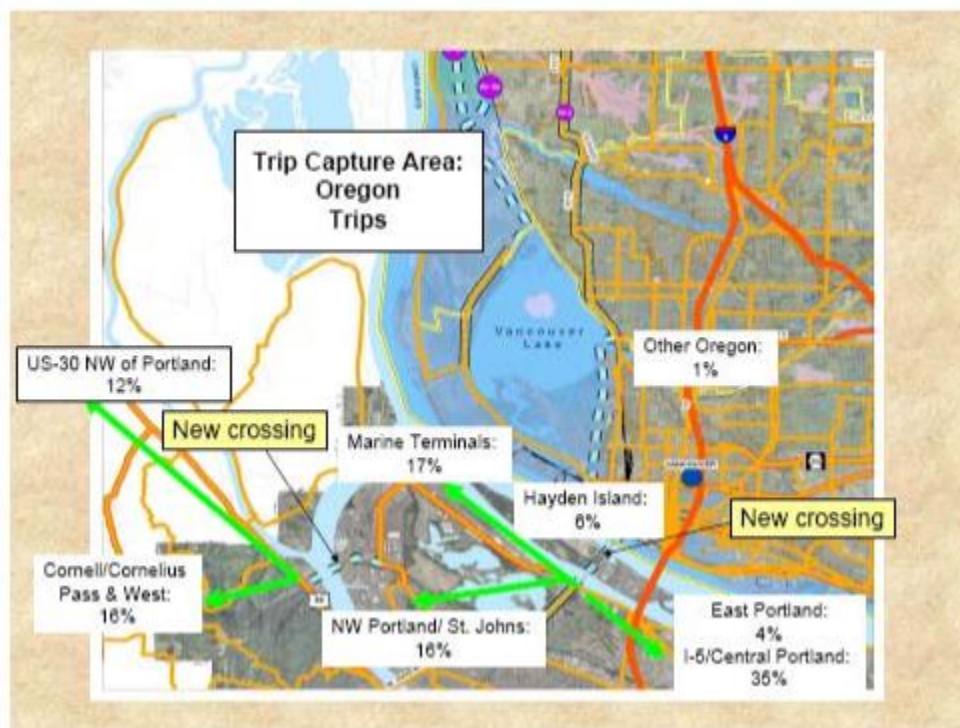
Each proposed corridor has been studied in detail, with numbers showing usage and relief of traffic congestion. For example, the RTC Visioning Study "indicates that the Westside corridor options would carry between 38,000 and 46,000 vehicles per day across the Columbia River. *If* 100 percent of those were round trip commuters to Oregon, that *could* equal 76,000 to 92,000 *crossings* that do NOT use the Interstate Bridge. *If* those were one-way vehicles (freight, etc.) it would take between a quarter and a third of the traffic off I-5 (140,000 vehicle crossings per day)."



Removing 40,000 vehicles from the Interstate Bridge would return it to levels in 1980, (100,000) and again in 1990 after the I-205 bridge had been open nearly a decade. Note that when I-205 opened in 1982, there was an immediate 18.5% drop in vehicles using I-5, or 20,000 vehicles not on I-5.

The westside connection was modeled as a “parkway” with 4-6 lanes and no tolls. The following percentage of trips at the time using I-5 would potentially use a western corridor which were spread significantly:

- 12 percent of trips would use US 30, northwest of Portland.
- 16 percent of trips would go to Cornell/Cornelius Pass & West
- 17 percent go to/from marine terminals at the Port of Portland
- 16 percent of trips go to NW Portland and St. Johns area
- 6 percent of trips go to Hayden Island
- 4 percent go to east Portland
- 36 percent go I-5/central Portland
- 1 percent to other parts of Oregon



## Perspective

A question that has been bantered about since a 2006 email by Oregon's Federal Highway Administrator, David O. Cox is the order in which the region should tackle its multiple issues. Cox asked whether *"we try for the easier (and less expensive) widening of I-205 first? Maybe, but that might reduce the perceived need for an improved I-5 corridor? Should we try for the 3<sup>rd</sup> bridge first to improve the connection between the Ports with a new "freight" corridor? Maybe, but that might be seen as a substitute for widening I-205 and improving the I-5 corridor."* What we have settled on at this time is trying to get the most challenging project, the I-5 bridge replacement underway first.

However, by Feb. 16, 2012 an additional issue was memorialized when an [Oregon Supreme Court Judge stated](#) about the Columbia River Crossing (CRC): *"The massive Interstate 5 bridge and freeway project is a 'political necessity' to persuade Clark County residents to accept something they previously didn't want—a MAX light-rail line from Portland to Vancouver."* He wrote in the opinion that the 10-lane freeway bridge and new interchanges—was put forward to get Clark County to agree to the light-rail line. The discussion continues today on what type of public transit will be part of the I-5 replacement, ranging from light rail to bus rapid transit.