

## Light Rail Transit: Supporting data and modeling assumptions

The panel recognizes that the CRC project has been evaluated through a NEPA process that began in 2005. The FTA New Starts program also tracked the NEPA process at each major level of analysis, culminating in the ROD by FHWA and FTA.

*The FTA's New Starts program is the primary federal funding source for major rail, bus, and other fixed guideway projects around the country. In order to qualify for this discretionary capital funding source, local project sponsors must adhere to a strict series of requirements spelled out by federal regulations administered by the FTA. All projects nationwide that seek FTA New Starts funding must follow this process, which is tracked by FTA staff at regional and headquarters levels.*

Projects with the highest ratings are best positioned to receive significant levels of federal funds. The CRC project has received an overall FTA rating of medium-high, which places the project favorably among other large transit projects nationwide.

Meeting the NEPA environmental and New Starts funding requirements involves developing an extensive amount of data through analysis and modeling to project anticipated impacts and outcomes once the system is in place. Thus, in some areas, data used to support certain CRC project assumptions are several years old and potentially out of date. While this is not unusual for such complex transportation planning processes, project managers should recognize the need to confirm and update these data as the CRC moves ahead.

### Sources Reviewed

The panel reviewed light rail-related sections of the CRC draft and final EIS and the operations and financing plan in the New Starts application, among other documents listed in the bibliography in Appendix B. The panel also received briefings from TriMet and CRC on May 8 and 9 about the data regarding the light rail component of CRC. These items are also included in the bibliography and appendices.

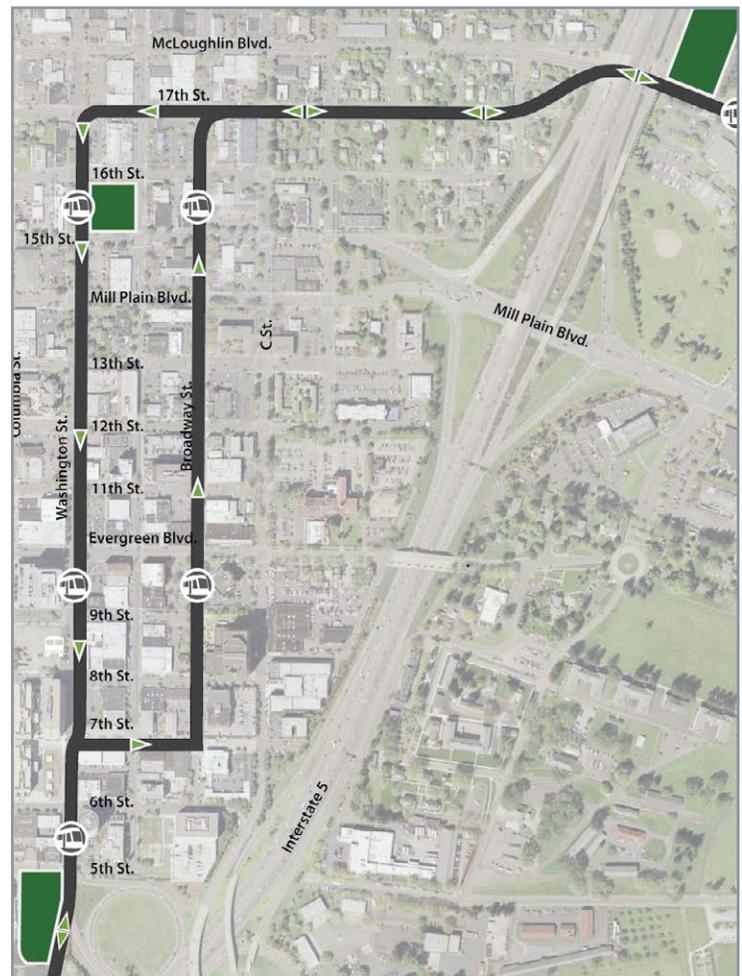
### Finding

Based on the information provided, the panel acknowledges that the CRC project differs from a typical New Start in that the light rail component is an extension of an existing system rather than the development of an entirely new system.

*In addition, cost and revenue allocations with TriMet have not yet been determined, nor have cost allocations for street-related improvements been fully established. With the understanding that there is work to be done as design moves ahead, the panel remains comfortable concluding that appropriate, reasonable processes have been followed to date.*

### Recommendation

The panel emphasizes, however, the need to update the data that drive some cost and operational assumptions. For example, future modeling updates should factor in 2010 Census and forecasting based on information reflecting post-2008 economic conditions. These updates should occur naturally as CRC project managers provide annual updates to FTA and pursue grant agreements through the New Starts program.



**The panel found that the proposed route and station locations shown above were appropriate to support light rail transit operation in downtown Vancouver.**