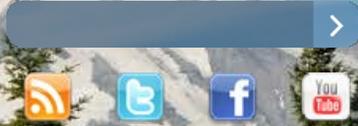




U.S. CONGRESSWOMAN
JAIME HERRERA BEUTLER
Representing Southwest Washington's 3rd District



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Jaime Herrera Beutler Raises Funding Issues with Head of U.S. Transportation Department over Oregon-led CRC Project
CRC project has still not met requirements to qualify for federal funding

WASHINGTON, DC, Sep 11 | 0 comments

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Congresswoman Jaime Herrera Beutler today sent a letter to U.S. Department of Transportation Secretary Anthony Foxx asking for clarity on the administration's role in the Oregon-led CRC proposal that lacks qualifications necessary to earn federal "New Starts" grant funding. In her letter, Jaime states that to this point neither state legislature has approved funding for the project as required by federal law. There also is no funding in place for maintenance and operation of light rail that also is needed to obtain federal funds from the New Starts program.

"Without cooperation from Washington State or any commitment to fund operation and maintenance at the local level, the project becomes 'light rail to nowhere,' and a completely different project from the plan originally submitted by the CRC," wrote Jaime. "Beginning a multi-state project of this magnitude without the approval of one of the involved states and its local citizens would be unprecedented in recent history."

The text of the entire letter follows, and the original letter can be found by [clicking here](#).

Dear Secretary Foxx,

I am writing you today to correct some of the inaccurate information circulating locally regarding the proposed Columbia River Crossing (CRC) project connecting Vancouver, Washington and Portland, Oregon.

The finance plan for the project calls for a significant investment by the federal government. The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) would provide \$850 million of that funding through its New Starts program. As you know, the CRC has applied for a New Starts grant but the application has not been approved. While I certainly believe the federal government has a responsibility to share in the cost of projects connecting two states on a major national interstate, this project has failed to meet numerous requirements to qualify for this funding. According to federal law, in order to qualify for New Starts project sponsors must provide a local financial commitment that achieves the following:

- A local match to a portion of the requested New Starts funding.
- The stability and reliability of the proposed capital financing plan.
- The ability to fund operation and maintenance of the entire transit system once the project is built.

None of these requirements have been met. On June 30th of this year, the Washington State legislature adjourned for its 2013 session after rejecting a proposal to fund the CRC. As a result, the Washington State Department of Transportation is in the process of shutting down the CRC's operation. Although the Oregon legislature did pass a funding package, its financial support was contingent upon the passage of Washington's portion of the funding. Therefore, neither state has authorized or appropriated the local match required by federal law, and without a source of funding, stability and reliability of the proposed financing plan is unachievable. Further, on November 6, 2012 the citizens of Vancouver, Washington soundly rejected the only formal proposal to date to pay for operation and maintenance of the transit system, which is, again, required by federal law.

Despite the shortcomings of the project and Washington State's end to operations, some local leaders have called for Oregon to use federal dollars combined with funding from the State of Oregon to begin construction on the Oregon side of the river without the approval of Washington State. With regard to federal funding, there are a number of obvious flaws in this idea:

1. There is currently no funding in place from either state to build this project.
2. There is no funding in place or promised to operate and maintain the light rail that would be built using the New Starts

grant.

3. The grant application currently under review by DOT would bring light rail across the Columbia River into Washington, terminating at Clark College in Vancouver. Without cooperation from Washington State or any commitment to fund operation and maintenance at the local level, the project becomes "light rail to nowhere," and a completely different project from the plan originally submitted by the CRC.

4. Beginning a multi-state project of this magnitude without the approval of one of the involved states and its local citizens would be unprecedented in recent history.

It is my understanding that this plan would not qualify for New Starts for the reasons stated above. I respectfully request that you provide clarity on the administration's role going forward and the requirements the project must meet in order to qualify for any federal assistance.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter. Please contact Chad Ramey in my Washington DC office for clarifications or with any questions.

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