

# **Columbia River Crossing**

## **Charter and Activities for the Community and Environmental Justice Group**

Updated December 13, 2006

### **Preamble**

The Columbia River Crossing Project will include full and fair participation by all potentially affected communities, including the low income and minority communities. The project team will work to ensure that the principles of context sensitive design are applied to assist in creating a project that meets the transportation needs in accordance with federal, state, and local agency regulations or legal requirements. In addition, the project team will work to balance project impacts and benefits so that they do not disproportionately affect low income or minority communities.

The project will need close coordination with communities in the Bridge Influence Area as a way to ensure they have adequate opportunities to learn about the project and to provide input at key milestones. Federal law requires that the project team reach out to people from minority (including non-English speakers) and low-income communities during the NEPA process to ensure that they have opportunities for meaningful engagement into project development. The demographic analysis completed in 2005 identified these target audiences to include low-income, African American, Latino, Vietnamese and Russian-speaking communities in the I-5 corridor. The project will ensure that anyone living in the corridor has opportunities for meaningful involvement in the development of the project.

The project sponsors propose to establish **The Community and Environmental Justice Group** to help with the effective distribution of project information to members of the community, and to receive input and recommendations from representatives of neighborhoods and underrepresented communities. The group will provide recommendations and engage in open two way communication with the Oregon and Washington Departments of Transportation and other project sponsors.

### **Charter**

Reporting to the Project Team, the purpose of this group is to ensure that communities affected by the project have meaningful opportunities to learn about and provide input to the project team as it is developed. The specific roles of the Community and EJ Group are to:

- Conduct individual or group review of the CRC project materials.
- Identify issues and concerns in the process, and present recommendations at key milestones to the project team.

- Assist the project team in effectively engaging the public in the project by:
  - Reviewing and commenting on outreach plan.
  - Identifying service providers and community based organizations in the project area.
  - Informing the project team of known changes in demographics within the area of effects since the 2000 Census.
  - Assisting in identifying community reactions, issues of concern.
- Provide input to the project team into relevant areas of interest (or potential impact) such as air quality, noise, highway interchange alignments and design features to help inform the project's efforts to avoid, minimize and/or mitigate potential impacts of the project to their community.

### **Proposed Activities**

The Project Team will host a day-long orientation session regarding the project, its background and status, technical and environmental issues to ensure that the members have a basis of knowledge and familiarity with the project to ensure that their participation is meaningful. Group members will also be asked to participate in a four-hour training on Environmental Justice to be offered by Running Grass, a nationally recognized trainer from EPA.

Members of the group will be expected to:

- Attend regular meetings through the release of the Locally Preferred Alternative
- Commit to working collaboratively with one another, ODOT, WSDOT, and the other project stakeholders while reviewing project details and providing input during project development;
- Communicate frequently with their respective constituency groups to keep them informed of project information, bring their input to the project team and to help develop an understanding and support of project recommendations;
- Identify community concerns related to the project and communicate those concerns to the Project Team in a timely manner;
- Provide input to the project team to assist with developing potential solutions as challenges arise on the project;
- Provide input to the project on balancing transportation, economic, and livability needs; and to
- Provide recommendations with regards to specific project elements to ensure there is a balance within impacted communities and that costs and benefits are reasonably distributed.