

COLUMBIA RIVER CROSSING

MYTHBUSTER

MYTH: The CRC has a poor track record

This is a reference to the cost and time it has taken to reach a Record of Decision. While it is true that the process of finding a design took longer and cost more than expected, proponents would argue that cost and time increases were driven by the complexity of the situation, including the partners involved (two states and the federal government) with different interests. Reaching the right decision is better than rushing and underfunding the wrong decision.

MYTH: The CRC is a waste of taxpayer funds

This is a reference to project staffing costs and money spent to reach a Record of Decision. Mega projects require staffing and funds to design the bridge that will later be built. Many options were evaluated and an extensive public process was held – things that require funding and which most would agree are important to the community.

MYTH: Light rail is not required for transit funding

Federal Transit Administration administrators have said dropping light rail from the project will drop their funding commitment of \$850 million to the project, and they would reevaluate support of the project once a new Bus Rapid Transit project was developed. If this happens, the CRC would go to the back of the federal project list and face years of delay. This would add \$50 to \$70 million to the cost of the bridge for every year of delay, in addition, there is no guarantee the revised project would receive any federal funds, much less the \$850 million that is on the table now.

MYTH: Tolls will take away money from our local economy

People will be paying a user fee to cross the bridge. If the claim is the toll will be burdensome to the point that people won't use the bridge, it would keep people from crossing the bridge and staying on the Washington side, and visiting their restaurants, movie theaters, and other services. The economic impact is complicated and could hurt some businesses, however proponents believe a new bridge will significantly benefit the region's economy.

MYTH: The CRC plan is a job killer

Advocates of the project would strongly disagree, as there will be many construction jobs associated with project work, and in turn, economic activity in the surrounding area

from those workers. Claims are also made that tolling and light rail will kill the local economy, and it's likely both items could increase/decrease business depending on what the business type. Light rail is seen as an economic development tool in other communities, drawing housing and economic activity to rail stops.

MYTH: River traffic is of vital importance (and the CRC will hurt it)

In response to concerns raised by the Coast Guard and others, WSDOT has undergone extensive negotiations with river users, and has submitted an application a bridge permit that raises the height of the bridge from 95' to 116'. This serves 99% of river users. The Coast Guard will now evaluate the application for the permit. It's premature to say the bridge won't work for future needs that might be mitigated.

MYTH: The Columbia River Interstate Bridge is not the problem

False. The bridge is structurally at risk in an earthquake and poses a threat not just to property but also to human life. Several factors lead to more accidents and decreased safety – poor sightline, interchange designs and the lifting of the drawbridge. The current bridge's three lanes in each direction are unable to accommodate entering and exiting traffic, bringing it to a standstill.

MYTH: The BNSF Railroad Bridge offers a better solution

In the process of reaching a bridge decision, many options were considered. The Record of Decision reflects the culmination of years of engineering review, public input, cost comparisons, and eventually what both states and the federal government could agree to as partners in the project.

The BNSF railroad-crossing suggestion would reduce the number of lifts needed on the current I-5 bridge, but does not eliminate them. In addition, there are other problems than bridge lifts, including seismic risk and safety concerns with the current sightlines and interchange designs.

MYTH: CRC lacks vision

The proponents would say the opposite. Clark County is on track to see considerable population growth, and the proposed bridge design will help move them over the river, while improving freight mobility, key to the economy.

MYTH: There is a lack of support by the voters

This is a reference to a ballot measure asking for a sales tax increase to support light rail operations, which failed in the fall of 2012. This was not a vote on the CRC project or even light rail in the new project itself.