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February 11, 2014

Therese McMillan
Acting Administrator, Federal Transit Administration
East Building
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590

Acting Administrator McMillan,

The Columbia River Crossing (CRC) bridge project continues to be a large focus of attention and cause of controversy in Southwest Washington. I am contacted on a daily basis by my constituents with questions and concerns. Due to the complexity, constant changing of design and plans, and the lack of transparency and public input associated with the CRC it is next to impossible to understand where taxpayer dollars are going and how decisions are being made.

One very helpful tool in understanding the many components of the project was the monthly report submitted to the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) by the Project Management Oversight Consultant (PMOC), Gannett Fleming, Inc. These reports were very detailed and often brought to light many aspects of the project not found in the media or elected leaders' press releases. For example, it is my understanding that the public learned of the CRC's insufficient height clearance through a PMOC report. Unfortunately, the last report was issued in May of 2013.

Through communications with your agency I have learned that FTA put a stop to accepting reports from and meetings with the PMOC until the Oregon legislature votes on a proposed finance plan for the multi-billion dollar bridge. Given the significant impact of the vote on the residents of Southwest Washington and the entire region I am extremely perplexed by the decision to discontinue this important source of information. One can only imagine that in order for the legislators to have the information they need to make the best decision for their constituents, reports with this level of detail and information would be essential, particularly considering the unprecedented ramification of the Oregon legislature's actions.

Congress created the PMOC process to ensure projects are proceeding according to schedule and to alert FTA to any risks of project delays or cost overruns. Suspending the work of the PMOC for eight months suggests that FTA is both unaware and uninterested in the status of the ongoing costs and timing of the project. It also appears the agency is simply ignoring Congress's mandate.

I respectfully request your clarification of the decision to stop the FMOC reports and who ultimately made this decision. In the reports' absence, how have FTA and project managers made that information available to the public and elected officials? Further, please let me know if the taxpayers are still paying for a PMOC now that the agency has discontinued meeting with them or accepting reports. This bridge has already cost the region hundreds of millions of dollars without gaining support from either state's government or moving one shovel. The people footing the bill deserve to know where their money is going.

I appreciate your attention to this important matter. Please contact Chad Ramey (chad.ramey@mail.house.gov) in my DC office for clarifications or further detail.

Sincerely,

Jaime Herrera Beutler

Jaime Herrera Beutler
Member of Congress