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October 24, 2013

Admiral Robert J. Papp, Jr.
Commandant, US Coast Guard
Headquarters
2100 2nd Street SW Stop 7000
Washington, DC 20593-70000

Dear Commandant Papp,

The Columbia River Crossing (CRC) project connecting Vancouver, Washington and Portland, Oregon has been one of the largest points of concern and interest in the region for the last decade. Due to the serious gaps in the project's design and financing, and a lack of transparency demonstrated by its sponsors, skepticism is widespread among the local communities and federal officials who are expected to approve and pay for the CRC.

Unfortunately, the United States Coast Guard's (USCG) permitting process has now become yet another point of concern. I sent you a letter on September 13, 2013 raising multiple points of concern and critical questions, and requesting all of the USCG's internal and external communications regarding the CRC for the last six months. That letter is attached. It is extremely disappointing that the Coast Guard refused to respond to this inquiry until after it announced the approval of the bridge's permit on the afternoon of September 27, 2013. Even more concerning is the lack of clarity in answers to questions within the letter, and the absence of the requested communications. I understand the government shutdown may have caused a delay in compiling documentation. However, after waiting for more than a month my office has not received any of the internal communications requested. Project sponsors are pushing this project forward with great urgency, so your timely cooperation with my September 13 request is critical.

I respectfully ask that you address the following concerns and questions:

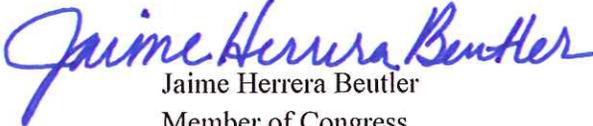
- In response to the request for internal and external communications, the Coast Guard offered only its hard copy external communication. The taxpayers who will be paying for this project deserve much better than that. Please provide us with all of the Coast Guard's internal and external communications over the last calendar year regarding the CRC – both hard copy and electronic (i.e., email).
- The Coast Guard letter to Congresswoman Jaime Herrera Beutler dated September 27, 2013 states, "The mitigation agreements entered into between Oregon and the impacted users do not mitigate the bridge's impact upon general navigation or affect the future use of the waterway by

prospective tenants of the Columbia River Business Center.” While the letter does go on to downplay the importance of river traffic, it does not adequately explain how the CRC failing to mitigate the bridge's impacts on current and future river users satisfies the USCG's duty to protect the “reasonable needs of navigation.” Please expand on the process used to determine “reasonable need” and how that process applies to the river traffic being impeded on the Columbia River.

There are serious concerns both throughout the region and here in Congress that the Coast Guard was improperly influenced to deviate from standard procedures to issue this permit – for a bridge that is too low and has not completed an environmental impact study that reflects the current design. Your cooperation in this matter is necessary in addressing those concerns and to provide the transparency taxpayers deserve.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter. Please contact Chad Ramey at chad.ramey@mail.house.gov in my Washington, DC office for clarifications.

Sincerely,


Jaime Herrera Beutler
Member of Congress