

Transit Choices

Fact Sheet  December 2007

Public transit is part of a long-term solution

The Columbia River Crossing project will expand options for improved travel between Vancouver and Portland. Bridge, transit and highway improvements are essential for addressing existing and future transportation problems in the project area.

Today, buses traveling on I-5 across the Columbia River experience the same congestion as other vehicles. Without major transit improvements, traffic delays for all vehicles will grow and transit service will deteriorate.



We need this project to make I-5 work better by:

- Preventing southbound congestion from starting before 6 a.m. and lasting until noon each weekday
- Preventing northbound congestion from starting at 1 p.m. and lasting until 9 p.m. each weekday
- Providing reliable high capacity transit service
- Improving safety on the I-5 bridge and highway
- Moving goods more efficiently for a healthy economy
- Providing safe and direct access across the Columbia River for pedestrians and bicyclists

Faster and Better Transit Service on I-5

Two types of high capacity transit are being considered: bus rapid transit and light rail. High capacity transit provides efficient and fast travel for large numbers of people.



Transit service gets stuck in traffic on I-5 like all other vehicles do today.

Both high capacity transit options would provide:

- Reliable travel times and more frequent service
- Better access to employment and commercial centers
- Connections to future planned transit enhancements in Clark County
- An alternative to solo driving across the Columbia River

The project is analyzing several transit alignments, stations and park and ride facilities to serve the bus and light rail options.



Mode Choice: Bus rapid transit or light rail?



What is bus rapid transit?

Bus rapid transit provides fast, frequent and enhanced passenger service and may use longer than average buses to carry more passengers per trip. The vehicles may have additional features like a lower floor for easier boarding and exiting. Buses travel within lanes dedicated exclusively to their use for part of their route. Bus rapid transit vehicles also have the flexibility to travel on regular roads.



What is light rail?

The “MAX” in Portland is an example of light rail. Light rail operates on tracks and uses electric trains in single or double cars. Reliable travel times are ensured because light rail vehicles operate on an exclusive track.

Both bus rapid transit and light rail would have stations or platforms that have features like shelters and ticket vending machines.

How do the bus rapid transit and light rail options compare?

Feature	Bus rapid transit	Light rail
Dedicated transit-only lane/track	Part of the alignment	Yes
Potential to extend alignment in the future	Yes	Yes
Feeder buses provide additional connections	Yes	Yes
Number of vehicles per peak hour (each direction)	14 to 24*	8 to 10*
Number of passengers per vehicle	91 (one BRT vehicle)	266 (two-car train)
Estimated number of passengers per peak hour (each direction)	1,300 to 2,200*	2,100 to 2,700*
Number of stations	8 with transfer station at Expo Center	7
Costs	Compared to light rail Approximately 20 percent lower construction cost; 35 percent higher annual operating costs	Compared to bus rapid transit Approximately 20 percent higher construction cost; 35 percent lower annual operating costs

* Low end of range is associated with replacement bridge alternatives. High end of range associated with supplemental bridge with enhanced transit service.



Alignment Options

Several alignments for high capacity transit are being considered in three areas of the project: Hayden Island, downtown Vancouver and north of downtown Vancouver.

Each option:

- Connects to the MAX light rail Yellow line at the Expo Center
- Operates in its own guideway across the Columbia River
- Meets an underserved need for transit service
- Is consistent with local neighborhood plans and land uses
- Is technically feasible

The project team is working to stay within existing right of way, but some land acquisition will be unavoidable.

Transit Alignment Choices and Issues

Tradeoffs for each area and alignment choice must be considered. Issues include the location of stations, the number of streets carrying public transit and the character of the surrounding land.

Hayden Island options	
Station next to Jantzen Beach SuperCenter	Station next to I-5
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greater potential to support redevelopment of Jantzen Beach SuperCenter • Station would be within walking distance of shops • Less noise from I-5 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Slightly lower construction costs • Floating home community is not divided by transit alignment across North Portland Harbor

Downtown Vancouver options	
North travel on Broadway Street and south travel on Washington Street (couplet)	North and south travel on Washington Street
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Easier to provide on-street parking, wider sidewalks and bike lanes • More direct access to transit on local streets • More locations for business growth around stations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Construction limited to one street • Potentially lower construction costs • One station would serve both directions of travel • Easier navigation for transit riders

North of downtown Vancouver options	
Alignment along Vancouver streets	Alignment along east side of I-5
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better access to neighborhoods • More foot traffic in Uptown Village Business District • Lower construction and annual operating costs • Construction time shorter by eight months • 20 percent more residents within a mile of stations • 10 percent more employment within half mile of stations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better access to Clark College, VA Hospital, Marshall Community Center • Easier access to neighborhoods east of I-5 • Shifts highway alignment 20 feet west • Requires retaining walls and more structures • Higher construction costs

How will decisions be made about transit improvements?

The project will analyze the transit alignments for these criteria:


- Cost effectiveness
- Potential to serve the greatest number of riders
- Least impact to private property
- Potential to meet land use plans
- Reflect local community visions
- Environmental impacts

Results of the analysis will be considered, along with input from the community and project sponsors to recommend one transit alignment and one mode. 

Tell us what you think about the proposed transit options and alignments.
How will they meet your transit needs?

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