

Bridge to Interstate Collapse via 12 Lanes

Contributed by Jan Lundberg
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Bridge to Interstate Collapse: the proposed Columbia River Crossing, 12 lanes (!) - Hello, peak oil?

The following letter I wrote to The Oregonian newspaper, on the occasion of an anti-road protest in Portland, is on their website and is in their Friday print edition. I was factual but unfortunately lacked compassion for the car-dependent many, whom I do not want to alienate or give extreme negativity. In activism one can rush too much, as in sending a time-sensitive letter.

The letter doesn't suggest I have a positive vision for communities, including Sail Transport Network, Pedal Power Produce, permaculture, depaving, community support, and ecological restoration. So I regret getting in people's faces more than necessary, when trying to "make a difference." By my tone, the audience I ended up writing for was small. An attitude that is rigid and offers no solution isn't welcome, and rightly so. I put my foot in my mouth, so in a workshop in Portland next month I trust I will offer a much clearer message.

I admit, I hate big roads. But far from being some angel of minimalism, I've generated more gasoline consumption than almost anyone – because of my previous career. And when I lived in L.A. I used to daydream about an additional freeway to go diagonally across the San Fernando Valley to quench my thirst for convenience. My regret: at my former family business Lundberg Survey and my own Lundberg Reports, I ran large market research projects regarding the U.S. gasoline market. This usually meant a fleet of contractors' cars as survey-vehicles. I don't think being car free, despite its advantages and the pollution-reduction for 20 years of being car-free, offsets the gasoline consumption I previously generated.

Dated Thursday online for Friday's paper:

Dear Editor,

The protest against 12 lanes of pollution to be constructed over the already ailing Columbia River was not limited to what was covered in Monday's story. The words "oil" and "petroleum" were absent.

Most of the protesters are aware that the vehicles to fill the added road capacity would only exacerbate oil dependence and climate extinction. Most Portlanders are against war for oil, so this is another reason to prevent the traffic-generating, incredibly costly project.

Global peak oil has hit, so if this boondoggle is built it will basically be a bike lane not long from now. The biggest environmental groups of the state are silent about this -- unsurprising when driving cars continues to be considered a kind of right.

JAN LUNDBERG

Arcata, Calif.

(I had put under my name "Oil-industry analyst, CultureChange.org," but this got cut. In between the last two sentences was a point that got cut: "\$18 billion are planned by Governor Kulongoski for new and wider highways, in part to accommodate population growth." -- perhaps the biggest environmental groups are no longer silent about that. Lastly, I gave a Portland address but the editor noted Culture Change is based in Arcata.)

My letter should have concluded, "More importantly, cars are not nearly as necessary as many people believe."

It's heartbreaking that Portland's mayor is kind of a green guy who put his stamp of approval on the bridge scheme (the British term "scheme" connotes project). Mayor Sam Adams thinks that if the structure is built with some renewable energy features, and if there's added convenience and safety for the non-motorist, then this kind of development is acceptable. Many disagree, but not enough. They have pointed out the drawbacks of the bridge to fossil fuel nowhere. Objections are environmental, quality of life, and financial. And oil and war.

The protest got good coverage in the Oregonian which discussed some of the transportation issues [go to our website version, link below].

Two days before the protest I was on an expedition to see farms for involvement in Sail Transport Network and Pedal Power Produce. The trip was successful -- a good thing when you were described on the radio as making the journey by bike when I actually rode in a car! It was a very short interview on KBOO-FM. Good exposure -- and I was upbeat.

The positive approach can help get people involved now in serious preparation for the rest of petrocollapse. And to begin a thriving sustainable culture, as soon as we gain more unity of purpose.
[note: links to road fighting groups to appear here shortly.]

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"Hundreds rally against 12-lane I-5 bridge project" by Dylan Rivera, The Oregonian
April 5, 2009:

oregonlive.com

"EPA cites lapses in study of I-5 bridge's impact on pollution, sprawl"
by Dylan Rivera, The Oregonian, July 11, 2008:

oregonlive.com

"Schwarzenegger's green mask falls as he pushes road boondoggles" by Jan Lundberg, 15 January 2009, Culture Change Letter #228:

Exposed: "Green" West Coast Governors

This report is Culture Change Letter #248

ANNOUNCEMENT: Soon we'll offer a report on Arcata, California's road building scheme that threatens a big frog population near my former family home.