

MEMORANDUM

DATE: September 29, 2005
TO: Task Force Members
FROM: Doug Ficco and Rob DeGraff, Project Co-Directors
SUBJECT: Overview and Interrelationship of Task Force Products

Over the course of the project, we will ask the Task Force to review and make recommendations on a wide variety of material. In the coming months, the Task Force will review and make recommendations on a few key products that help to set the foundation for future decisions. This memorandum provides an overview of those products and an explanation of their interrelationships. We will present more detailed information on these items at the October 12 Task Force meeting.

Vision and Values Statement

The Vision and Values Statement represents the Task Force's own view of the goals and objectives of the Columbia River Crossing project – both in terms of process and outcomes. As adopted by the Task Force, this document will inform future Task Force deliberations. The Project Development Team will also use this Statement as a basis for developing criteria for use in evaluating alternatives throughout project development as described below.

Problem Definition

The Problem Definition should capture a common understanding – shared by the project partners as well as the community – of the transportation problems to be solved by this project. In its final form, it will become a key component of the evaluation framework as discussed below.

The Draft Problem Definition brings together information gathered over the past few years into a concise description of the transportation problems in the project area that need to be solved. The draft document, presented to the Task Force in September, will be discussed further at the October meeting. Information on transportation problems in the project area will be presented at a series of open houses in October for public review. Questions soliciting public views of the problems will also be included in an on-line Web survey in October and November.

In October and November, the Project Development Team will revise the draft document, based on Task Force discussions, public input, and additional data analysis. The revised document will be presented to the Task Force at its November meeting for action. The recommendations of the Task Force and the Project Development Team will be presented to the Project Sponsors Council in December for final adoption.

Purpose and Need

The Purpose and Need Statement is a technical document that translates the Problem Definition into language appropriate for inclusion in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement. Its content will directly parallel that of the Problem Definition, but its specific format and terminology will be crafted to meet Federal Highway Administration and Federal Transit Administration requirements for National Environmental Policy Act documents. The Task Force will not be asked to review the Purpose and Need Statement.

Evaluation Framework

The Evaluation Framework will establish criteria for measuring the effectiveness of project alternatives. Criteria are developed based on the problems identified in the Problem Definition, and on the community values identified in the Vision and Values Statement, as supplemented by public input from open houses in October and an on-line survey in October and November.

The Evaluation Framework will also provide a logical process for narrowing down the large number of ideas for solutions generated at the outset of the project. Through successive evaluation, the most promising ideas will be packaged into viable alternatives, and then narrowed into a set of alternatives for consideration in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement. Ultimately, the evaluation criteria will support the selection of a preferred alternative.

The Project Development Team will present the Draft Evaluation Framework to the Task Force at the October meeting. The Team will revise the draft based on Task Force discussion and input from the open houses and the on-line survey and present a revised document to the Task Force at its November meeting for action. The recommendation of the Task Force and the Project Development Team will be presented to the Project Sponsors Council in December for final decision.

Project Schedule Implications

Decisions on the Problem Definition and Evaluation Framework are needed before the Task Force can consider alternatives, which is expected to begin in January, 2006.