

From: ChalMartin
To: rkw57@msn.com
Cc: Gary Rowe ; DaveBrookings ; SteveFlude ; DonDixon
Sent: Friday, December 20, 2002 10:55 AM
Subject: Skagit Flood Project -- Need Advice

Bob

Hope you and your family are doing well this holiday season. <<Refocus Memo 12-13-02. doc>>
We have just begun to sense winter setting in around here. Got snow, finally, in the mountains with a cold weather system that came through on Wednesday. El Nino has been sending our precipitation to California and the Rockies this year. So the river is low and nobody is thinking much about floods.

Say, could you look at the attached memo, and let me know what you think? By way of background: after our last "executive" meeting with the Seattle District COE staff, it was apparent to Public Works staff that the emphasis on the flood bypass part of the proposed flood project was sinking this thing like an anchor on the Titanic. Federal resource agencies are dead set against it, Tribes are killing it with faint praise, and our local cities are ambivalent at best. In short, we are continually trying to carry the baggage on this project, attempting to sell it, and those who will be most negatively affected by the floods are mostly sitting back and watching. In addition, we are at a good transition point in the project, because we now know the makeup of our own County Commission. Also, the Corps is working (very slowly) in crafting a new Project Management Plan which will call for studying the effect of the bypass on the eelgrass of Padilla Bay. The study will be done by the smart (and sheltered) people of Battelle Labs, and cost \$2 million. Or so. What the heck, cost is no object. We think that study will say: armagedden is at hand if the bypass goes forward. Further, the Corps in their brilliance had one of their under informed attorneys write a legal decision that basically said we're toast if we don't handle the whole Padilla Bay issue with kid gloves (i.e., poor money into studies).

Given all this, we in Public Works want to change the focus of the discussion. That focus would be getting the 100-year flood through the "3 bridge" corridor, which is the constriction that exists now which will force water to jump the river east of Burlington. As you can see from the outline, I believe if we focused on this as "Phase I" of the flood project, then we might be able to actually get something done. And at a much reduced federal construction cost.

My question for you: what is the timing for us to go after federal transportation dollars and get a project (or projects) put into the next 6-year transportation bill to extend the three bridges so that the corridor can be widened? From the west moving east, we have the I-5 bridge (state owned); then the Riverside Bridge (Burlington/Mount Vernon owned); then the Railroad Bridge (BNSF owned). I believe we could get strong political support from our Board and the Mayors and Councils of the cities to go after a line item appropriation (do they still call these "demonstration" projects?) in the new bill. What do we need to do, and by when, to try to make that happen?

This idea would force some kind of an overtopping solution at the riverbend area. A floodway would likely have to be designated. But it is a more pragmatic approach, I think. Regarding Commissioner support for this idea: I've spoken with all three. Commissioner Anderson believes he could support this effort; further, he thinks he could help with the lobbying effort to get money, especially since the R's are back in the senate, and he also has contacts with the railroad. Commissioner Munks believes the concept has merit, and he wants to think on it. Commissioner Dahlstedt believes the concept may be forced on us, and he supports withdrawing our support for the eelgrass study, which he knows will have the effect of killing the bypass idea for now.

So at this point, I am gathering information on what might be possible, in preparation to change

the approach. In that context, I would appreciate your help. My direct number is 360 419-3470. Of course, email always works fine. Thanks Bob. Have a great holiday season. Chal

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