

Dear Mr. Saxton:

I'm writing to comment on the Cross-Base Highway Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) and urge you to proceed with the "no build" alternative. I am outraged that the Federal Highway Administration would even consider building the Cross-Base Highway across the last remaining habitat of western gray squirrels, which are listed as "threatened" with extinction in western Washington.

"Western gray squirrels would likely be extirpated from the habitat study area north of the proposed highway due to isolation and because there is insufficient habitat area and habitat quality north of the highway to support a squirrel population." (Cross-Base Highway FEIS, p. 4-134).

Fragmentation of habitat is likely to doom not only the northern part of the population, but the rest as well, since it is unlikely that a highway is the only threat that the remaining population will see over the coming decades. The highway is expected to destroy 1600 acres of squirrel habitat, including old growth Garry oak woodlands. Some 97% of oak woodlands have already been lost to development in western Washington. In Seattle and other areas they have been virtually extirpated everywhere except in a few city parks, where they are too limited in number and disturbed in context to provide any significant habitat for the dozens of species associated with more intact oak woodlands, such as those slated for destruction by this proposed highway. Even without western gray squirrels it would be ill-considered to further destroy our remaining oak woodlands, which will be much harder to replace than any road.

The road itself is a ridiculously expensive proposition that will snarl existing corridors for years during construction and rapidly fill up with cars when completed, doing little or nothing to relieve congestion. In the face of global warming and shrinking oak woodlands, it would make far more sense to spend \$200 million on developing sensible mass transit systems.

"Overall, people would travel a little farther to use the new Cross-Base Highway project to avoid other congested highways and arterials; this would increase miles driven." (Cross-Base Highway FEIS, p. 4-201).

As a former instructor at PLU, I used to regularly commute in this area, by carpool, by bus, and sometimes also as a single-occupancy vehicle. No projections that I have heard of anticipate that we can build our way out of gridlock as an inevitable consequence of our growing population and car-oriented culture. On the other hand, the destruction of our natural areas is a certainty if this kind of building project continues to be viewed as a "solution", and global warming and oil wars are almost inevitable accompaniments. Highway dollars would be much better spent helping to get

people off of highways or improving the passenger/fuel efficiency of the vehicles on the roads than on huge projects like this that will not actually do much to relieve congestion.

Spending up to 200 million dollars to build a highway that causes extreme environmental damage while failing to resolve traffic problems is a bad idea. I urge you to adopt the "no build" alternative.

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