

PUBLIC COMMENTS FOR IBR EXECUTIVE STEERING GROUP

Received between May 25th, 2023 and October 16th, 2023

Number of Comments Received: 1

Date Received: 10/16/2023

From: Bob Ortblad

Email Subject: **ESG Oct. 18, 2023 - Public Comment**

Attachment Included: Yes – two attachments were provided, and begin on Page 2

Comment* seen below

**Please note that the IBR logo, images, graphics, and corresponding information shared in the comment below were not approved or endorsed by the IBR program*

Executive Steering Group

Public Comment, Oct. 18, 2023

Suggest visiting @BOrtblad(Twitter) and watch:

ASCE “Exploring an Immersed Tunnel Solution”

<https://twitter.com/BOrtblad/status/1641484667286339585>

Hayden Island Neighborhood Network (200 attendees)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zRXJqqNEZMY&t=5s>

Respectfully

Bob Ortblad MSCE, MBA



Bob Ortblad

@BOrtblad

...

IBR admits its immersed tunnel estimate of excavation & dredging 7.9 million CY is incorrect.

No small error, correct estimate could be much smaller, 2 million CY.

Paid \$100,000, 17 engineers signed this report.

Incompetence disqualified an immersed tunnel.

From: Interstate Bridge Replacement Program Team support@commentsensemanager.com
Subject: Interstate Bridge Replacement Program Communication Response
Date: September 8, 2023 at 2:12 PM
To: b.ortblad@comcast.net
Cc:



Good afternoon,

Thank you for reaching out to the Interstate Bridge Replacement (IBR) program and for sharing your questions about the Cross Section areas. We are responding back to address your specific questions but want to be clear that this does not change that the tunnel still does not best address the needs of the I-5 bridge and the corridor.

Our team of engineers uses a variety of software tools, such as InRoads that you referenced. We have investigated your inquiry and were able to confirm an issue with the model. Duplication occurred in the model where some excavation quantities were counted more than once. We are working on making the correction in the report and uploading an updated version.

However, upon reviewing what you provided, it appears your representative diagram and excavation calculations at 87+00 do not account the construction need for laying back slopes during excavation (and the resulting surface property impacts), or the alternative to have temporary structural walls which come with an extremely high cost. As you know, one of these options must be accounted for to prevent the sides of the trench from caving in during construction of an ITT.

We conduct continuous quality checks and assurances to catch any errors that may arise with third party software and appreciate you flagging this. Quantity errors like this are not uncommon during the development of conceptual work. In a situation where plans are being constructed, the increasing level of detail completed as work advances would address potential calculation errors before moving to future steps.

As we have extensively detailed and documented, a tunnel still results in out-of-direction travel, cannot tie into existing connections, potentially causes safety concerns for active transportation, has significant environmental impacts, and has a higher estimated cost. While this error does result in a change in the quantity of excavation of material, it does not change the decision, reached with agency partners, not to pursue a tunnel as a solution for the I-5 corridor as the multiple factors considered remain true.

We appreciate your understanding.

Sincerely,

Interstate Bridge Replacement program

Communications Team

4,038 Views



Bob Ortblad @BOrtblad · Sep 10

IBR belittled a critic when told its tunnel report is misleading. Confronted with proof, IBR does not admit deception but pleads incompetence. IBR's "Tunnel Concept Assessment" must be retracted, and issue an apology.



Bob Ortblad @BOrtblad · Sep 8



IBR admits its immersed tunnel estimate of excavation & dredging 7.9 million CY is incorrect.

No small error, correct estimate could be much smaller, 2 million CY.

Paid \$100,000, 17 engineers signed this report....

[Show more](#)



1



8



19



1,428



You reposted



Bob Ortblad

@BOrtblad

...

@ctranvancouver @VancouverUS @portvanusa @PortlandGov @trimet @oregonmetro @PortOfPortland

The IBR surreptitiously issued Revision 2 of "Tunnel Concept Assessment". For two years IBR was told excavation quantities were misleading. The IBR now admits a 4 million CY error.

CITY OF VANCOUVER



PORT OF PORTLAND

TRIMET



RTC Southwest Washington Regional Transportation Council

C-TRAN

Table 1. Preliminary Tunnel Excavation Quantities

Location	Upstream Alignment	Downstream Alignment
Hayden Island (on land)	1,800,000 yd ³	2,200,000 yd ³
Columbia River (in water)	3,800,000 yd ³	4,000,000 yd ³
Vancouver (on land)	2,300,000 yd ³	2,700,000 yd ³
Total	7,900,000 yd³ -4,000,000	8,900,000 yd³ -4,500,000 correction
	200%	200%

Tunnel Concept Assessment

July 14, 2021

Table 1. Preliminary Tunnel Excavation Quantities

Location	Upstream Alignment	Downstream Alignment
Hayden Island (on land)	800,000 yd ³	1,000,000 yd ³
Columbia River (in water)	2,100,000 yd ³	2,300,000 yd ³
Vancouver (on land)	1,000,000 yd ³	1,100,000 yd ³
Total	3,900,000 yd³	4,400,000 yd³
	100%	100%

Revision 2

No Public Notice

September 18, 2023



Bob Ortblad @BOrtblad · Aug 18
Alternative not considered by IBR



No rebuild of 7 interchanges, saving billions.
Northbound bridge repurposed to shared path (like NYC High Line) connecting Hayden Island & Vancouver waterfront parks.
Southbound bridge repurposed for light rail, less costly ground level stations



6

16

50

5,832



5,823 Views



Bob Ortblad
@BOrtblad



Lift Bridge or High Bridge.

IBR is presenting a false dichotomy, forcing a choice between only two incorrect options when better options exist.

Immersed tunnel is a better option.
Intentionally disqualified by the IBR.

The graphic features a blue header with a white scales icon on the left. To the right of the icon, the text reads "False choice Dichotomy" in white. Further right is the logo for the "Interstate BRIDGE Replacement Program", which includes a stylized bridge icon and the program name. Below the header, the text "Presenting two options as the only possibilities, when other possibilities exist." is written in white. The main body of the graphic is divided into three sections. On the left, there are two images: the top one shows a "Lift Bridge" with a curved deck supported by tall towers, and the bottom one shows a "High Bridge" with a flat deck supported by multiple piers. On the right, an aerial view of a river crossing is labeled "AN ALTERNATIVE". This view shows a "Tunnel" structure under the river, with a callout box containing icons for a car, a truck, and a bus. Below the tunnel, two lanes are labeled "Southbound" and "Northbound", each with icons for a car and a bus. At the bottom of the graphic, a wide, long bridge with many piers spans across the river.

11:47 AM · Oct 5, 2023 · **748** Views



Bob Ortblad
@BOrtblad



IBR's handpicked committee told they cannot discuss benefits of a tunnel.

Mr. Johnson admits a huge error, tunnel excavation corrected from 8 to 4 million CY, then makes a false claim about interchange.

"You miss .. SR-14 without ripping out half of Fort Vancouver to do it."

Greg Johnson, IBR Program Administration

"..forget building a bridge, build a tunnel."

"We are not going to litigate that issue in this committee."



Opinion: Interstate Bridge Replacement Program incompetence and deception



File photo.



Opinion...



Share

Retired Engineer Bob Ortblad believes a new study of an immersed tunnel by a consultant independent of the IBR must be done

Bob Ortblad MSCE, MBA

The Interstate Bridge Replacement Program (IBR) is the most expensive Washington highway project ever proposed, estimated to cost \$5 to \$7.5 billion. However, the IBR is risking \$2.5 billion in essential Federal funding. IBR's incompetence and deception will not go unnoticed by the Federal Highway Administration, U.S. Coast Guard, and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

Unfortunately, \$300 million has been wasted promoting a dangerous bridge design to replace the Columbia River I-5 Bridge. A decade ago, the failed Columbia River Crossing (CRC) wasted \$200 million and in the last three years the IBR has wasted an additional \$100 million resurrecting the CRC's failure.

The CRC/IBR bridge design is too dangerous. Two years ago, Antonio Lopez was killed by bad engineering. His SUV hit an icy curve on the I-205 Bridge and plunged into the Columbia River. The IBR's bridge design will be steeper with a -4% downgrade, have a sharper S Curve, and an icy north-facing slope that will



Bob Ortblad

make it more lethal than the I-205 Bridge. Building this bridge would be more than engineering incompetence, it would be criminal.

The IBR intentionally disqualified a safer immersed tunnel alternative. A safer immersed tunnel will also reduce noise and pollution on Hayden Island, Vancouver, and Fort Vancouver. A tunnel will allow waterfront parks, can be built in half the time, and have less impact on salmon during and after construction. A tunnel will also enable the repurposing of the current southbound bridge for transit and a repurposed northbound bridge for walkers and bikers that would be a popular civil attraction.

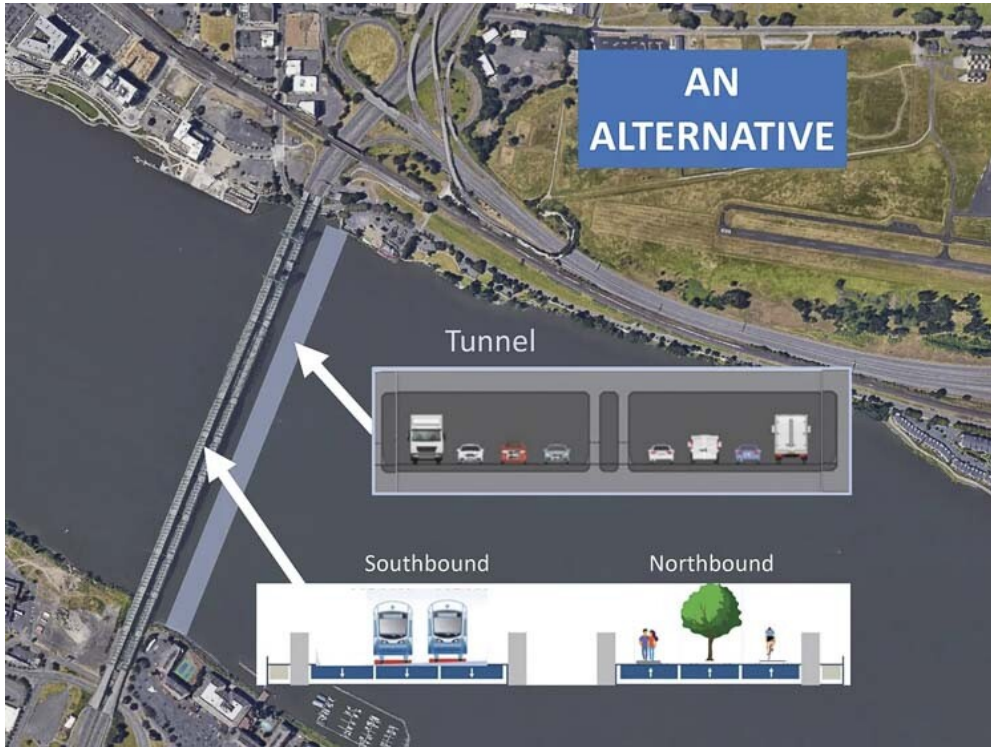


Image courtesy Bob Ortblad

Two years ago, on July 17, 2021, when the IBR team presented their "Tunnel Concept Assessment," I challenged the inflated estimate of excavation and dredging. Program Administrator Greg Johnson assured me that WSP/USA consultants were experts and had done their research. Thirteen professional engineers and four consultants signed the report. With no professional engineer's stamp, this unofficial report was used to disqualify an immersed tunnel alternative to the public and government officials. The legality of the report was challenged, and the IBR finally had the report stamped on April 19, 2023, by a professional engineer, twenty-one months after it was issued.

Last month, from a Public Disclosure Request, I obtained the IBR's excavation and dredging calculations and drawings. My analysis confirmed my original doubts. The estimated 7.9 million cubic yards is wildly inflated. Every one of the 158 cross-section areas used to compute cubic yard volume is incorrect. A realistic estimate is 2.1 million cubic yards. This massive error of 6 million cubic yards can only be explained by intentional deception. Confronted with this error, after three weeks, the IBR pleaded incompetence. The IBR claims data was duplicated, and problems with third-party software, and quantity errors are common. The IBR just issued Revision 2 of its "Tunnel Concept Assessment" admitting its quantity estimate of 8 million cubic yards is 4 million cubic yards too large. An estimate error of over 6 million cubic yards is closer to the truth. The IBR surreptitious release of Revision 2 should be shared with local, state, and federal agencies that made decisions on this report. The IBR claims infallibility and refuses to retract this report.

Ridiculous and misleading quantities that require 200' excavations & dredge depths of 80'. Realistic quantities are 1/4 as large and costly.

Table 1. Preliminary Tunnel Excavation Quantities

Location	Upstream Alignment	Realistic
Hayden Island (on land)	1,800,000 yd ³	200,000 cy
Columbia River (in water)	3,800,000 yd ³	1,400,000 cy
Vancouver (on land)	2,300,000 yd ³	500,000 cy
Total	7,900,000 yd³	2,100,000 cy

Misleading

Realistic

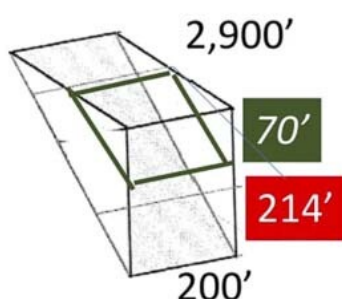
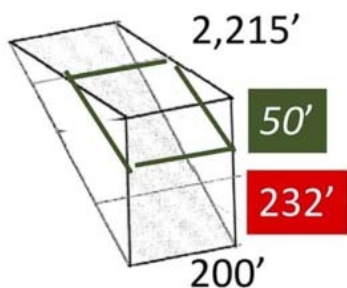


100%

27%

Hayden Island

Vancouver



Retired Engineer Bob Ortblad believes a new study of an immersed tunnel by a consultant independent of the IBR must be done.

Local political leaders rushing to grab Federal funds may ignore IBR's deceit. The cities and ports of Vancouver and Portland plus C-TRAN, TriMet, Oregon Metro, and SW Washington Regional Transportation Council have all approved IBR's bridge, the only alternative offered. The IBR has told them there is fierce competition for Federal funds. A Supplemental EIS requires evaluation of alternatives. The IBR is offering a single dangerous bridge alternative and ignores a safer immersed tunnel alternative, risking the loss of Federal funding. The Environmental Protection Agency will never approve the IBR single alternative-bridge Supplemental EIS and the IBR will lose \$2.5 billion of Federal funding.

The IBR must retract this report and notify the public and government agencies that relied on it. WSP/USA must refund its consulting fee. A new study of an immersed tunnel by a consultant independent of the IBR must be done. An immersed tunnel alternative must be included in the IBR's Supplemental EIS.

Bob Ortblad is a retired Civil Engineer, MBA, and CPA. He taught the history of infrastructure at the University of Washington, presented "Who Built Seattle" at Seattle Town Hall, and has experienced the infrastructure of seventy countries. He has lived on Capitol Hill in Seattle for 40 years.