

Commander (dpw)
United States Coast Guard
915 2nd Avenue room 3510
Seattle, WA 98174

RE: PUBLIC NOTICE 01-26 - Interstate Bridge Project

Commander:

I am a recreational sailboat owner who regularly navigates the Columbia River. I am also the cruising chair for Rose City Yacht Club. RCYC is the second oldest yacht club in Portland and the majority of members have sailboats in the 30 to 50 foot range. Of our 150 member boats, about 125 are sailboats. All of the sailboats in our yacht club need at least 40 ft of vertical clearance. My 36' sailboat requires 52 feet of vertical clearance. Because of this, I am concerned about the proposed navigation restrictions during construction of the Interstate Bridge Replacement project. During the anticipated 17-month period when only the 39' clearance channel will be open, all of our sailboats will require a bridge lift to proceed down river past the I-5 bridge. And all vessels requiring more than 39 feet of clearance will have to rely on bridge lifts to transit through the primary navigation channel. Bridge lifts are restricted in the time of day they are available, and this negates our long-established right to navigate freely on the river. This prolonged restriction represents a loss of access to a federally navigable waterway that recreational boaters have long depended upon.

Our club encourages members to use their boats and we have a number of down river cruises every year. The most popular cruising destinations are all down river from the I-5 interstate bridge. Just the annual RCYC sponsored cruises down river represent over 160 boat trips up or down river needing a bridge lift. Every bridge lift not only inconveniences the boater involved, but it causes major traffic backups on the I-5 hwy. Every bridge lift will create ill-will between boaters and commuters. This is not an

outcome I want to welcome. I do not want the general public blaming me as a boater for problems I had no part in causing. Our goal at RCYC is to encourage boating.

I am also concerned that requiring all commercial vessels, recreational powerboats, and sailboats needing bridge lifts to use a single navigation channel for an extended period will increase congestion and reduce safety. Sailboats often have limited maneuverability while waiting for bridge openings and are more affected by wind and current than powered vessels. Delays associated with bridge openings, combined with increased traffic in one channel create greater risks for recreational mariners and diminish river enjoyment and accessibility. While I recognize the importance of replacing the aging bridge, the construction sequence places a significant burden on recreational boaters for nearly 1.5 years, a timespan that may easily become protracted given the history of delays and extensions during significant public works projects.

I request that the U.S. Coast Guard evaluate whether additional mitigation measures can be incorporated into the plan to reduce impacts. Options such as minimizing the duration of the alternate channel closures, maintaining additional navigation routes where feasible, or implementing operational measures that provide timely and predictable bridge lifts would preserve reasonable access for recreational vessels. Thank you for ensuring that the final plan provides a balance between completing this critical project and protecting the long-established navigation rights of mariners on the river.

Sincerely,

A black rectangular box redacting the signature of the Rose City Yacht Club Cruising Chair.

Rose City Yacht Club Cruising Chair