

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

RE: PUBLIC NOTICE 01-26 - Interstate Bridge Project

Commander:

As a recreational sailboat owner who regularly navigates the Columbia River, I am concerned about the proposed navigation restrictions during construction of the Interstate Bridge Replacement project. My sailboat requires approximately 50 feet of vertical clearance, allowing it to normally transit through the existing lift span. During the anticipated 17-month period when this option will be closed, and vessels requiring more than 39 feet of clearance must rely on bridge lifts through the primary navigation channel, the long-established right to navigate freely on the river will be significantly impacted. This prolonged restriction represents a loss of access to a federally navigable waterway that recreational boaters have long depended upon.

Sailboats require regular maintenance. Currently, the only facilities that provide out-of-the-water services are located downriver past the I-5 bridge. Limiting the movement of boats might lead many boat owners to delay such regularly necessary maintenance work. This, in turn, would have significant economical impacts for the downriver boat yards that provide these services.

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,

[REDACTED]

(located at Rose City Yacht Club)