

# PROTECTING A COLLEGE

## When it comes to the subject of light rail, Clark's Knight wants key answers provided

Opponents of light rail might cheer last week's news that Clark College President Bob Knight is troubled about the possibility of a line terminating just west of the school, between Fort Vancouver Way and Interstate 5.

At the same time, those who support light rail but don't want it to run up Main Street to the Kiggins Bowl vicinity might fret that Knight's stance boosts the odds a line will end up going where they don't want it to go.

In any case, Knight's doubts further stirred the pot containing these questions:

Should a new bridge over the Columbia River carry light rail or special rapid-transit buses, and, if rail, where should the tracks go?

The light-rail stew was already plenty thick before Knight added his ingredients. But it's a good thing he did and that Clark is launching a process to evaluate potential impacts on the school. In an issue this important, no one wants to discover new issues after the bistate Columbia River Crossing group settles on a final proposal.

On June 24, Clark's trustees will get Knight's recommendation for a Vancouver light-rail terminus. Speaking for the trustees, he said Friday, "We favor the replacement bridge with light rail."

That's the same dual stance that has been taken by The Columbian.

But we acknowledge that a full exploration of all concerns is crucial to the process.

What the trustees have not yet decided is which of four sites they

favor for the northern terminus of a light-rail line. And Knight, as the local college president, is asking a lot of very good questions, such as:

■ If a light-rail terminal is built across Fort Vancouver Way from Clark College, will there be plenty of parking for its riders? If not, what's to keep them from using parking spaces that Clark students need?

■ A related question: If officials decide to require paid parking at a light-rail station, what would keep train riders from using free Clark College parking spaces instead?

■ How much auto traffic would funnel into the light-rail Park

& Ride lot, possibly jeopardizing the safety of Clark students walking across Fort Vancouver Way?

■ What security would there be at a light-rail Park & Ride lot?

"We want to work with the community on a solution," Knight said last week, stressing that he doesn't rule out the possibility that all of his concerns might be satisfied.

There are numerous factors that will be weighed by the Columbia River Crossing task force in deciding on a preferred terminus, if light rail is recommended. Many of those issues are not major factors in the Clark College discussion, such as cost comparisons, sources of funding and alignment for possible future extensions of a light-rail line.

It's good that Knight is asking the tough questions, looking out for the best interests of Clark College.

And it's good that he is open-minded about the possibility his concerns will be met.

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