



City of Portland Design Commission

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June 30, 2022

Honorable Mayor and members of City Council:

In a few weeks, you will be asked to give feedback regarding the recommended Modified Locally Preferred Alternative (MLPA) for the Interstate Bridge Replacement Project (IBRP). As you contemplate many important issues concerning this project, we recommend that you consider the critical importance of the bridge design, the placement and design of its many components, to the successful development of our region. This large project involves not only the replacement of the river bridge, but also extension of TriMet's light rail system into Vancouver, improvements to the freeway, local street, pedestrian, bicycle, open space and environmental infrastructure as well.

On June 2nd, 2022, the Portland Design Commission was briefed by the IBRP staff regarding the process, schedule, and the composition of the various advisory groups for the project. The Commission learned that an MLPA is a high-level identification of mode, alignment and other improvements, but NOT a conceptual design that includes those foundational components into the identified corridor. The Commission was assured of receiving additional briefings as the design for the project is developed and refined.

As you recall, with the recent adoption of the Design Overlay Zone Amendment, bridges are excluded from review and approval by the Design Commission. As a result, any briefing or discussion of the bridge designs by the Commission will be at the discretion of the owner agency and only as a courtesy - any suggestions by the Commission are viewed as advisory.

The location of the interstate bridge on the mighty Columbia River, its role as a gateway to states of Oregon and Washington and the scenic Columbia River Gorge, and its magnificent natural setting DEMANDS that design of the replacement bridge and its connections to the land on both banks of the River are carried out at the highest level of excellence and that it will sensitively integrate with its surroundings in terms of urban design, land use planning and environmental considerations. Furthermore, a well-designed and aesthetically pleasing bridge, and its various off and on ramps, is critical to the health and vibrancy of future development on Hayden Island, the Marine Drive area, and downtown Vancouver, with enormous long-term potentials for economic development for both Vancouver and Portland.

Therefore, we are writing this letter to urge Portland City Council, before approving the MLPA, to require that the project include a BI-STATE Design Oversight Committee with authority to make recommendations to the Executive Steering Committee as the project moves forward.

This Design Oversight Committee should be composed of engineers, architects, landscape architects, urban designers and artists who have deep experience with projects of this scale, complexity and level of community input process, selected from both States. Also, we strongly recommend that one member from both the Design Commission and Historic Landmarks Commissions for Portland be added to this committee as they bring a comprehensive level of design, as well as a thorough understanding of the long-range plans for growth and development in the corridor.

This Committee should be charged with:


- Developing design principles and guidelines for the evaluation of the bridge design and other project components.
- Meeting on a regular basis during the design process to review the project's progress, to consider the overall and place-specific design as well as the bridge design, and hold the project accountable to adopted design standards and guidelines.
- Appointing the chair or a member of this committee to serve on the Executive Steering Committee to strengthen and streamline communication channels.
- Helping to develop the language of the Request for Proposal package for the bridge design, including the design qualifications and scope of work.
- Assisting in the review of submitted proposals from potential project designers.

In conclusion, with respect to the City priorities of centering equity and climate, we urge you to additionally prioritize that the design and urban form of the project infrastructure contribute to the long-term value of existing land uses and economic development opportunities in the surrounding communities. In many cities, too many major infrastructure projects are simply utilitarian and forgettable. This project must respect and become a positive contribution to the cultural, built and natural environment it lives in.

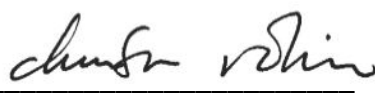
Thank you for your consideration,




Sam Rodriguez, Chair




Julie Livingston



Chandra Robinson, Vice Chair



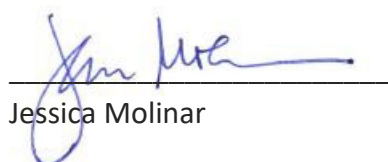
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