

January 28, 2009

Mayor Vera Katz, Chair  
Willamette River Bridge Advisory Committee

Dear Mayor Katz:

I apologize for not being able to attend the February 5, 2009 meeting of the Willamette River Bridge Advisory Committee (WRBAC). I have a regularly scheduled meeting of the Lloyd TMA Board of Directors that requires my attendance.

It is my understanding that the task of the WRBAC at its February 5 meeting is to come to a recommendation on the question of whether or not to continue the "wave" design bridge option for further analysis and review. In anticipation of this discussion I asked project staff to present a detailed review of the WRBAC's work and deliberations at our most recent meeting of the Portland-Milwaukie Light Rail Project Citizen's Advisory Committee (CAC). I wanted to be able to reflect the CAC's views on this matter at the February 5 WRBAC meeting. Rob Barnard ably facilitated our group through the intricacies of both the wave and cable stay options and the issues of design, engineering, risk, constructability and cost.

After review of Rob's presentation and discussion by the CAC, the committee strongly believes the WRBAC should focus solely on the cable stay design. In all, 17 members voted for the WRBAC focusing on the cable stay design, while zero opposed and two abstained. While our discussions were preliminary to help guide the WRBAC, the CAC will be asked to make a formal bridge recommendation to the Portland-Milwaukie Steering Committee at its February meeting.

The reasoning underlying the CAC recommendation was first and foremost based on a system view of the entire light rail project. In its deliberations during the SDEIS process, the CAC's first and foremost priority for the project was that it extend to SE Park Avenue in Clackamas County. The need to take light rail as far south as possible for purposes of ridership, community building and regional mobility are essential to the CAC's definition of the "success" of the project. The CAC understands those who would favor the wave design, but the bridge crossing and the WRBAC process are focused on but one element of a much larger light rail project – a project that needs to make every effort possible to get to SE Park Avenue and create stations and access within numerous neighborhoods that lie along the way. The cost differential between the wave and cable stay alone gave our group pause in that accommodating the higher cost design would likely result in value engineering out other elements of the alignment – length, number of stations and safety, for instance – which were high CAC priorities stated in the SDEIS.

Other considerations that compelled the CAC to recommend the cable stay design were uncertainties in constructability, engineering, single source procurement of steel and schedule associated with the wave frame design. In short, there were too many "ifs" about the design that were not issues with the cable stay option. The innovation underlying the wave concept was not lost on our group, but the need to stay on budget and on schedule within an already precarious funding package makes a compelling case for the cable stay.

That said, no one within the CAC indicated negativity toward the design character of the cable stay option. The design team has done a marvelous job in providing the project, and the community, with a bridge crossing for which Portland can be proud. It also is a design that will contribute to a *project* that the region can be proud of as well.

Thank you for taking the time to consider our input and recommendation. If there is more that you would like from our committee, please ask and we will respond promptly. It has been an honor to serve on the WRBAC under your leadership.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rick Williams", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Rick Williams  
Chair, Portland-Milwaukie Light Rail CAC