

December 20, 2019

Joint Committee on Ways and Means Co-Chairs Senator Johnson, Senator Steiner Hayward, Representative Rayfield and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of Metro, the Portland area's regional government, we are pleased to support the recommendation of the Willamette Falls Locks Commission (WFLC) for an appropriation of \$14.043 million of lottery revenue bonds in the 2020 legislative session to repair and reopen the Willamette Falls navigation canal and locks for economic development by returning the locks to public service. We further support the WFLC's recommended legislation to establish a public corporation, the Willamette Falls Locks Authority, as the new owner/operator to manage the operations and maintenance of the locks following their transfer from the US Army Corps of Engineers. Finally, we support the recommended business plan for the Willamette Falls Locks Authority which is based upon user fees once repairs have been completed.

During the transition period when the new Willamette Falls Locks Authority is being established and repairs are being implemented, Metro pledges to contribute funding in partnership with other public and private stakeholders in the amount of up to \$50,000 per year for a four-year period to support the establishment and work of the Locks Authority. While Metro is committed to seeing the initiative through to completion, this funding commitment is subject to budget actions of future Metro Councils and proportional participation by partner agencies.

Metro has been a supportive partner in the efforts to repair and reopen the Locks because of the economic benefits that will be realized, including potential transportation benefits. We participated actively in the Locks Task Force created by the 2015 Legislature (SB 131) and the Locks Commission created by the 2017 Legislature (SB 256). Metro has contributed a total of \$233,000 in cash plus in-kind staff support over the past five years for the work performed by these legislatively established entities. The work performed by the Task Force and the Commission includes considerable due diligence on options for ownership, engineering evaluation of repair and future maintenance, economic benefit, operating and business plans and options for funding initial repair and subsequent operation and maintenance. With an elected Councilor sitting on the Locks Commission, Metro supports their recommendations.

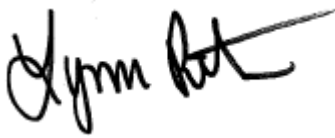
It is important to recognize the findings of the 2015 Locks Task Force and 2017 Locks Commission that significant benefit will be derived from the repair and reopening of the Locks, which will reconnect the Upper and Lower Willamette River. The Willamette is one of only 20 National Water Trails designated by the National Park Service. The opportunity to support redevelopment plans under way in cities and communities with river frontage, including those in close proximity to Metro investment, is a significant driver in Metro's leadership with the Locks. Additionally, we are intrigued by the opportunity to explore lower cost and more environmentally sound movement of commodities, open up new markets for tourism through boats operating tours, and enhance recreational boating.

Now is the time to take action. The US Army Corps of Engineers has completed and gained approval for a plan of action to transfer the Locks to a non-federal entity in recognition of the loss of nationally significant economic benefit. Throughout this process, the Corps has been a cooperative partner and has structured their action around making a transfer to an entity that will repair and operate the Locks. However, it is equally clear that our failure to identify a transferee will result in a more permanent decommissioning of the Locks through construction of a concrete bulkhead. The recommendations of the Locks Commission are consistent with the direction of the Corps in both scope and timing.

In conclusion, we urge the 2020 Legislature to adopt legislation to create the proposed Willamette Falls Locks Public Corporation and appropriate the requested \$14.043 million to implement the needed repairs.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Lynn Peterson".

Lynn Peterson, President
Metro Council

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Christine Lewis".

Christine Lewis, Councilor
Metro, District 2
Member of the Locks Commission

Cc: Willamette Falls Locks Commission