

Salem Parks and Recreation Advisory Board

(SPRAB)

May 19, 2025

Dear Mayor Hoy, City Councilors, and Interim City Manager Namburi:

I write to express the Salem Parks and Recreation Advisory Board's support for the **Oregon Department of Transportation's Center Street Bridge Seismic Retrofit Project – Phase 1, and staff-identified mitigation measures.**

The Salem Parks and Recreation Advisory Board provides recommendations and guidance to the City regarding our park and recreation lands, facilities, and programs. Our eight volunteer board members, appointed by the City Council, receive input from the community to guide our recommendations aimed at enhancing Salem's >90 parks and the natural resources and recreation opportunities they provide across their 2,500 acres.

Our board received presentations and public input, and engaged in discussions on this topic during two of our recent meetings. We recognize the important contribution to safety and resiliency the seismic retrofit project – for both the bridge and the city water line – will bring to our community. However, we also acknowledge that this critical benefit comes with difficult tradeoffs that impact the city, our park resources, and the community's ability to engage with those park resources.

Phase 1 of this project will include design and construction efforts that will strengthen the Center Street bridge and help it remain intact during a seismic event. This project will include efforts on both banks and across the river to install new piers, enlarge footings, strengthen piles, and add ground anchors. This multi-year project will have substantial impacts to Riverfront and Wallace Marine parks, public access, pedestrian circulation, and river navigation. We expect over 100 city trees to be removed, and the significant loss of parking spaces – particularly at Riverfront – with further impacts to Riverfront access.

Our board members expressed a great deal of concern over the substantial loss of trees and the potential loss – or, at minimum, increased difficulty – in accessing these parks by the community, especially during large events. Our board emphasized the importance of maintaining access to both parks throughout construction and ensuring the fewest number of trees were removed – and ultimately replanted.

Given these concerns, **our board was very appreciative of the avoidance, minimization, mitigation, and enhancement measures that have been identified by city staff and ODOT.** We believe these are essential measures that will enable this important project to move forward in a manner that does not result in undue negative impacts to our parks or

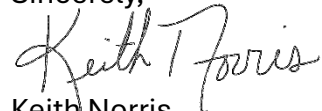
community use of those parks. In particular, we are very supportive of key measures that will:

- Maintain public access to parks and facilities, including pedestrian and bike connections between Riverfront Park and Union Street Railroad Bridge.
- Preserve vehicle parking where possible, and providing additional (~93 stalls) parking off-site for the duration of construction to support access.
- Provide shuttle services and parking ambassadors during major events hosted at Riverfront or Wallace Marine (for 4 events per year).
- Compensate the community for the tree removals and support the replanting of trees.
- Implement two tree protection areas identified in Wallace Park.
- Maintain river access continuity for the Willamette River Water Trail.
- Restore park property and the parking area after construction.

We believe these measures will allow this project to proceed in a manner that supports the resiliency of the community and retains the values we place on our park resources. At our April 10 meeting, **our board moved to support the project contingent on implementation of the identified avoidance, minimization, mitigation, and enhancement measures.**

As this project moves forward, SPRAB will continue to monitor park-related impacts and maintain our role in safeguarding public park values. We value and appreciate the park and other city staff's engagement on this important issue. Thank you for your leadership and consideration of this project and measures.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Keith Norris". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Keith Norris

Chair, Salem Parks and Recreation Advisory Board