May 9, 2019

Council President Lynn Peterson and Metro Councilors
600 NE Grand Avenue
Portland, OR 97232

Re: Willamette Falls Locks funding in Metro Parks and Nature Bond

Dear President Peterson and Council:

On behalf of the Willamette Falls Locks Commission, we are writing to request that Metro dedicate $5 Million from your planned 2019 Parks and Nature Bond towards the repair and reopening of the Willamette Falls Locks and the associated trail and park facilities at the Locks and in the immediate area. Metro’s financial and logistical support to date for the Locks has been critical to our success, and your support of the urgently needed capital repairs and facility improvements is the next step in seeing the Locks reopened as part of a thriving Falls area.

Since 1873 the Willamette Falls Locks have made the Willamette River one river for navigational purposes from its headwaters south of Eugene to the Columbia River in Portland. However, in 2011 the USACE, which owns the Locks, closed them due to safety concerns caused by lack of maintenance. We see a true value in reopening the Locks to realize a wide variety of cultural, economic, transportation, environmental, and recreational benefits.

We have documented recreation and tourism benefits from reopening the Locks of $12-50 million over the next 30 years. Kayakers and canoeists will follow the Willamette Water Trail, one of only 20 National Water Trails in the U.S., extending 187 miles and linking the communities and cities along the river. Guided day trips and hotel barge cruises to Newberg and Oregon’s wine country can also be expected. The Locks include a historical museum and open space area that will complement the recreational and tourism attractions.

The Locks are of significant historical and cultural value to Native American tribes and all Oregonians. In 1974 the Locks were listed on the National Register of Historic Places, and in 1991 listed as a State Historic Civil Engineering Landmark. The National Trust for Historic Preservation declared the Locks a National Treasure in 2012.

Metro bond funding would leverage state funds and be paired with funds from the US Army Corps of Engineers to complete the capital repairs needed at this facility and provide greater access to the museum and open spaces.
Metro has been a strong partner in the Willamette Falls Legacy Project and intends to invest significant parks and nature bond funding for that project. An additional expenditure in the Locks and neighboring parks and trail facilities would leverage your Legacy Project investment and allow the area to unlock its true potential as a local, regional and national destination.

We appreciate Metro’s partnership in the effort to transform the entire Willamette Falls area and look forward to continued strong cooperation with you in the future. Thank you for your commitment to this region’s future.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Russell B. Axelrod
Commission Chair and West Linn Mayor

[Signature]

Martha Schrader
Commission Co-Vice Chair and Clackamas County Commissioner

[Signature]

Sandy Carter
Commission Co-Vice Chair and Clackamas County resident