



March 2, 2011

To: Metropolitan Policy Committee  
From: Paul Thompson  
Subject: 5.b: Interstate 5 Willamette River Bridge Naming

**Action Recommended:** Approve Letter of Support for Naming of Interstate 5 Bridge as Whilamut Passage Bridge.

### **Issue**

The purpose of this agenda item is to request that the MPC endorse a recommendation to name the new Interstate 5 bridge over the Willamette River the "Whilamut Passage Bridge."

### **Background**

The Whilamut Natural Area Citizen Planning Committee is following a process prescribed by the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) to gain local support for "Whilamut Passage" as the name of the new I-5 bridge over the Willamette River. ODOT requires support from local jurisdictions, including the Metropolitan Policy Committee (MPC) acting as the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) Policy Board, for a name recommendation for the new bridge (see Attachment 2).

In 2008, the ODOT Community Advisory Group endorsed Whilamut Passage as the theme for a new Willamette River Interstate 5 bridge shared by Springfield and Eugene. The purpose of the theme was to guide aesthetic enhancements related to the bridge, such as cultural and historical interpretation, naturescaping, and art. The name was coined by Douglas Beauchamp of the Lane Arts Council. Whilamut is a Kalapuya word whose English translation is, "Where the river ripples and runs fast." Passage refers to the nexus of movement associated with the bridge: motorized vehicles on roadways; pedestrian and bicycle paths; the railroad; water and aquatic life in the river and riparian corridor; and the passage of time itself.

In October 2009, ODOT's Design Enhancement Panel voted to endorse Whilamut Passage as the name of the bridge. This was followed by endorsement votes from the Citizen Planning Committee for the Whilamut Natural Area of Alton Baker Park, and ODOT's Community Advisory Group, both to name the bridge Whilamut Passage. ODOT's informational web page on the new bridge (<http://www.WillametteBridge.org>) provides additional information related in the "Design Enhancements" section of the page.

Additional information on the introduction of Kalapuya names into parkland surrounding the north anchorage of the bridge can be found at [http://egov.oregon.gov/ODOT/HWY/OTIA/WRB\\_TalkingStones.shtml](http://egov.oregon.gov/ODOT/HWY/OTIA/WRB_TalkingStones.shtml).

The Whilamut Passage Bridge name is endorsed by the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde, the Willamalane Park and Recreation District board of directors, U.S. Representative Peter DeFazio, and all local Oregon Senate and House members.

The Eugene City Council voted to endorse the proposed name on August 9, 2010. The Springfield City Council voted to endorse the proposed name on October 18, 2010. The Lane County Board of Commissioners voted to endorse the proposed name on February 22, 2011.

After the Whilamut Passage Bridge name is acted upon by the MPC, the next step would be to seek endorsement from the Oregon State Geographic Names Board. Should this happen, Jane Lee of ODOT has said that the agency will recommend approval to the Oregon Transportation Commission (OTC).

### **CAC Involvement**

The MPO Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC) reviewed this request at their September, 2010 meeting. The CAC voted, 10:0, to support the name Whilamut Passage for the new Interstate 5 bridge over the Willamette River in honor of the cultural heritage of the location.

### **TPC Involvement**

The Transportation Planning Committee (TPC) has not reviewed this request.

### **Recommendation**

Approve Letter of Support (see Attachment 1).

### **ATTACHMENTS**

1. Draft Letter of Support
2. I-5 Willamette River Bridge Naming Procedure
3. Brochure – *Emerging Theme: Whilamut Passage*