

City of Springfield
225 Fifth Street
Springfield, Oregon

Dear Mayor Leiken and Council Members:

As ODOT's Area Manager during construction of the I-5 detour bridge in 2003-04, and as a lifelong Lane County resident until my recent move to Wyoming, I endorse the name "Whilamut Passage Bridge" for the permanent replacement bridge now under construction.

As part of our public outreach for the detour bridge, ODOT conducted weekly tours of the project. We worked with the Citizen Planning Committee for the Whilamut Natural Area of Alton Baker Park in giving these tours, pointing out to diverse groups taking the tours that we were caring for the parkland surrounding the northern anchorage of the bridge. I took particular pleasure in pointing out the nearby Talking Stones to school children. My father and grandfather were concrete contractors in Springfield from early 1920 until 1953 and left a talking stone legacy in the city. They placed large sections of sidewalk on Main Street, and many sidewalks today carry the stamp of "R.J. Pirrie and Son", with dates 1924 through 1930.

My father and grandfather worked on the construction of the Springfield Bridge, and our family home was located on West B street from 1925 until 1953. The family had many experiences with Willamette River flood waters during the winters, and learned to be very respectful of the power of the river. With grandparents buried in Creswell and the Laurel Hill Cemetery our family has strong lasting ties to the Willamette Valley and the River.

The Whilamut Passage name makes a connection both to history and to the contemporary movement of the vehicles that make our modern society possible -- and both names, Whilamut and Passage, address the river over which the bridge passes.

I think the name will generate pride in the descendants of those Kalapuya people who lived here for many centuries, and make us proud that this beautiful structure's graceful arches complement the river.

Robert J. Pirrie
Cheyenne, Wyoming