

MMC

Metropolitan Mayors Consortium

Ad-Hoc

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City of Fairview

Mayor Pete Truax
City of Forest Grove

Mayor Jerry Willey
City of Hillsboro

Date December 11, 2015

To: The Honorable Kate Brown, Governor of Oregon

RE: **Willamette Falls Locks and Emergency Preparedness**

As Mayors of the cities surrounding the lower Willamette River, we are writing you to urge recognition of a neglected asset in our region that could also play an invaluable role in the event of a magnitude 9.0 Cascadia earthquake: the Canal and Locks at Willamette Falls in West Linn.

The Willamette Falls Locks served a critical role in the development of the Willamette Valley through the transportation access it provided for the movement of people and goods. As documented in the Oregon Resiliency Plan reported to the 77th Oregon Legislature, the severity of impacts to our region from a Cascadia earthquake will likely be very significant and the recovery time lengthy (potentially months to years). Of particular concern is the loss of vital infrastructure, including roadways and bridges. While the Oregon Resiliency Plan prioritizes seismic retrofit of the I-5 corridor, the route that may be accessible the quickest is the Willamette River itself. The key to having this emergency route available is the Willamette Falls Locks, joining the upper and lower Willamette River.

While the Locks served Oregon well for 150 years, it was placed into “non-operational” status by the US Army Corps of Engineers due to structural life safety concerns from deterioration resulting from deferred maintenance. However, the future of the Locks is at a pivotal moment with the adoption by the 2015 Legislature of SB 131 calling for establishment of a Task Force to make recommendations on a governance, ownership and finance model to repair the Locks and reopen them for sustained operations. As the work of the Task Force proceeds, we request that you keep in mind the related recommendations of the Oregon Resiliency Plan and the prospect that restoration of the Willamette Falls Locks provides an important emergency response and commercial route for community recovery. We urge your support for the timely repair and reopening of the Willamette Falls Locks for both the on-going movement of people and freight and critical emergency response and community rebuilding following a major earthquake.

In a related matter, we applaud your leadership in forming the Governor’s Transportation Vision Panel to make short and long term recommendations on multi-modal transportation needs and financing, and your direction that the Panel include an assessment of seismic upgrade priorities and funding.

We the mayors of the here listed cities are pleased to raise awareness on this important issue for our region.