

Memorandum

Department of Planning and Development

Planning Division



To: Dan Stewart, Maine Department of Transportation
Carl Eppich, Portland Area Comprehensive Transportation System

From: Molly Casto, Senior Planner on behalf of the Portland Planning Division

Date: February 12, 2009

Re: Vision for the new Veteran's Bridge

The City of Portland is pleased at the many opportunities presented by the forthcoming replacement of the Veteran's Memorial Bridge. The new bridge affords a chance to achieve not only a high level of functionality in channeling multiple modes of transportation between Portland and South Portland but an equally high level of design merit, creating an attractive and distinctive gateway for both communities.

The recent updates incorporated into the Veteran's Memorial Bridge RFQ effectively illustrate these priorities and the selection process for design and engineering consultants should continue to prioritize excellence in design and sufficient accommodation for multiple modes of transport including cars, pedestrians, bicycles, and mass transit. The new bridge has the potential to serve not simply as a travel corridor but as a valuable recreation link between the cities of Portland and South Portland. The Portland Planning Authority has identified the following priorities for the development of the new bridge:

1. **Stakeholders should have ongoing input throughout the partnering process to be certain that design and access elements that are identified as priorities are incorporated as they were originally envisioned.** Previous experience with the design-build process has taught us that design elements require continual attention throughout the design, value and engineering process.
2. **Seamless connection from the bridge span into existing and proposed pedestrian and bike linkages at Fore River Parkway intersection, including the Fore River Trail, West Commercial & Danforth Streets.** This will necessitate improvements to the intersection on the Portland-side, which is currently challenging for bicycles and pedestrians to navigate due to insufficient wayfinding, long crossing distances and tight openings in the guardrails at the crosswalk aprons. Improvements along the bridge span and into the

intersection that should be explored include improved directional signage for pedestrians and bicycles and the addition of pedestrian refuges along all street crossings. Upcoming expansions to Portland's trail connections such as the Bayside and Libbytown Trails, and the West Commercial Street Trail have the potential to direct many more pedestrians and bicycles to and from the new bridge. The recent improvements to the trail and open space along the Fore River associated with the Mercy Hospital project, and the planned Merrill Memorial public art sculpture add to the attractiveness of this area. A bridge with adequate bicycle and pedestrian accommodations linking to South Portland's Greenbelt Walkway and Long Creek will further add to this activity. Thus, improving not only the bridge span but access to and from either side is critical to the project's success as a multi-modal facility.

3. **A design that facilitates winter maintenance of bicycle and pedestrian lanes** to provide safe year-round access to those who rely on the bridge for regular commuting.
4. **A pedestrian and bicycle lane design that is inviting** not only for confident cyclists but for recreational users such as new cyclists, or those traversing the bridge with their children or pets. An adequate barrier separating lanes for motorized and non-motorized users is essential.
5. **Careful attention to design elements such as materials, form, colors, and lighting** will be important in achieving a design that is sensitive to the built and natural elements abutting the site and achieves a level of design merit worthy of a city gateway.

We appreciate the time, energy, and ideas that the Department of Transportation, PACTS and our fellow stakeholders have contributed thus far and look forward to continued participation in the project development process.