



Oregon

Kate Brown, Governor

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November 7, 2022

Satvinder Sandhu
Operations Engineer
Federal Highway Administration
Oregon Division
530 Center Street, NE, Suite 420
Salem, Oregon 97301

**Subject: Section 4(f) *de minimis* Findings for the Willamette River Water Trail and Riverfront Commemorative Park/Orleans Natural Area
OR 34 Van Buren Bridge Project
Benton/Linn County, Oregon
ODOT Key No. 20688
Federal Aid No. S210(022)PE**

Dear Mr. Sandhu,

This letter requests the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) approval of a Section 4(f) *de minimis* finding for The Willamette River Water Trail (the Trail) and the City of Corvallis owned Riverfront Commemorative Park and Orleans Natural Area, recreation resources located within the OR34: Van Buren Bridge project area.

The Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) in partnership with the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), proposes to build a new two-lane eastbound bridge with multi-use path to replace the existing one-lane Van Buren Bridge. The bridge is adjacent to downtown Corvallis, Oregon, on the main highway connecting Corvallis to Interstate (I-5). To minimize traffic impacts during new bridge construction, a temporary detour structure will be constructed immediately downstream (north) of the existing bridge. A temporary work bridge will be constructed immediately upstream (south) of the existing bridge to facilitate removal of the existing Van Buren Bridge and construction of the new bridge.

Construction is expected to take approximately 4 years in order to accommodate the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife Guidelines for Timing of In-Water Work. The first in-water work period (June 1 – October 15) will consist of constructing the detour and temporary work bridges. The second in-water work period will complete in-stream demolition of the existing Van Buren Bridge foundation and construct the new bridge foundation. The third in-water work period will remove the temporary detour and work bridges. Work will generally occur from shore, from temporary work barges, or from temporary work bridges.

After construction, the new Van Buren Bridge will provide a minimum horizontal clearance of 245 feet (167 foot US Coast Guard navigational opening dictated by vertical clearance requirements), which is significantly larger than the existing 80 foot horizontal clearance. In addition, the new bridge will have two in-water supports vs. three on the existing bridge, and will be aligned with the downstream Harrison Street Bridge from a river navigation perspective.

A 40-foot temporary navigation channel will be provided throughout construction. The temporary navigation channel will be well marked at water level with all US Coast Guard required navigation aids. Signage at the temporary structures and nearby water access points (boat ramps and public owned recreational areas) will also be provided.

The Willamette River Water Trail is a nationally recognized water trail and American Heritage River. As a significant recreation area as determined by the official with jurisdiction, Oregon Parks and Recreation Department, the Willamette Water Trail is considered a 4(f) resource. The portion crossed by the Van Buren Bridge is characterized by a single channel both up and downstream. Recreational navigation occurs year round in the stream reach, with personal paddlecraft and “float tubes” being the most frequent type. The Oregon State Rowing Team also uses the river between the mouth of the Mary’s River upstream 0.5 mile, downstream 1.2 miles to the first shallow riffle near the Hewlitt Packard facilities. Their boathouse and dock facilities are located 0.1 mile downstream from the bridge on the east bank.

Riverfront Commemorative Park was dedicated in 1994 and contains almost 12 acres elongated along the Willamette River. Owing to the site’s size and prominence, many local markets, festivals, walking/running events, and community activities utilize Riverfront Park. It is bordered to the north by the Aquathusist boat ramp and to the south by Shawala Point, which is at the confluence of the Willamette River and Mary’s River. In between are many special features including:

- Public spray fountain pool.
- Three public plazas available for event reservation
- Eric Scott McKinley Skate Park
- Extensive landscaping with an emphasis on native plants
- Willamette River overlook areas
- Dog off-leash park
- Artistic park sculptures & interpretive signs
- Restrooms, bike racks, and benches
- A 12 foot wide multi-modal path forming the east end of the Corvallis-Philomath pathway

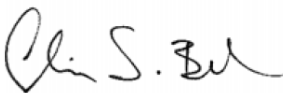
Orleans Natural Area is a combination of undeveloped natural area and agricultural land rented to local farmers by the City of Corvallis. The park features riverside hiking trails and natural areas. Sections of the park are under service agreements with local farmers for crop production and vegetation management. The park does not have a formal parking area. Users can access the park by parking on the west bank of the Willamette River and crossing the bridge and onto the

Susan Wilkins Path on the south side of OR34/Van Buren Avenue. Bicycle and pedestrian traffic would be maintained across the river throughout construction and only 0.4 acre closest to OR34/Van Buren Avenue would be temporarily used for construction staging.

The limited channel restriction and temporary occupancy to the river banks along with temporary rerouting of bicycles and pedestrian on park paths are limited to the duration of construction. However, the slight realignment of park/natural area paths for their connection to the new bridge and change in bridge bent locations within the river results in a *de minimis* impact determination. There will be no permanent right of way acquired from any of these resources, only temporary construction easements. A *de minimis* impact determination is based on the degree or level of impact to a Section 4(f) property, including any avoidance, minimization, mitigation, or enhancement measures included in the project to address the Section 4(f) use. The evaluation takes into account the expected positive effects of any measures to mitigate the adverse effects on a historic site, park, recreational area, or refuge and results in no adverse effects to the qualifying activities, features, or attributes of the Section 4(f) property. The proposed project will not require any permanent acquisition of land from either the Park, Natural Area, or the Willamette River Water Trail, nor result in any adverse effects.

See the attached Section 4(f) *de minimis* Official with Jurisdiction Letters for additional information and supportive figures. Please contact Adam Roberts at 541-912-2162 if you have questions pertaining to this finding. Upon approval, please transmit the signed copy to this office (TLC, 4040 Fairview Industrial Drive), where we will distribute this according to protocol.

Sincerely,



Chris Bell
ODOT Architectural History Program Coordinator

The FHWA makes a Section 4(f) *de minimis* finding for **The Willamette River Water Trail and Corvallis City Parks** for the **OR34: Van Buren Bridge** project as described in this document.

DOUGLAS
RICHARD HECOX

Digitally signed by DOUGLAS For
RICHARD HECOX
Date: 2022.11.16 17:21:24 -0500 *KLynch*

11-16-22

Keith Lynch
Oregon Division Administrator
Federal Highway Administration

Date

Copies to:

Emily Cline, FHWA

Adam Roberts, ODOT Region Environmental Coordinator

Attachments:

Signed Section 4(f) Official with Jurisdiction Letters

4(f) *De Minimis* Public Outreach Summary
OR34: Van Buren Bridge Project
Willamette River Water Trail and City of Corvallis Parks
KN20688
Fed Aid# S210(022)PE

With regards to public outreach and coordination, coordination with stakeholders, including officials for the City Corvallis, Linn and Benton Counties, and the Willamette Riverkeeper, occurred during project development. A two week public comment period (October 5-19, 2022) was advertised on the project website along with the draft 4(f) *de minimis* finding documents and a comment form link. Flyers with QR code links to the draft finding documents and comment forms were posted at Willamette Park, Crystal Lake Boat Ramp, and the Michael's Landing public river access. Direct coordination with the Benton County Sherriff Marine Patrol Division, Corvallis Fire Department Search and Rescue, and the Oregon State University Rowing Team Director. The Benton County Sherriff's Office requested more information regarding navigation lighting on the structures. Excerpts from the plans and project special provisions were provided in response. The Sherriff's Office thanked ODOT for the additional information and had no further comment. No other public comments were received.