CITY OF Spokane Valley®

Public Works Department
Capital Improvement Program

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November 17, 2010

Bart Mihailovich
Spokane Riverkeeper
35 West Main, Suite 300
Spokane, WA 99201

Subject: Barker Road Access

Dear Mr. Mihailovich:

This letter is in response to your November 5, 2010 letter to me regarding the above subject. It appears, based on several statements in your letter, that there are several misunderstandings about the referenced "access lane". My goal is to help clarify many of these issues and provide you a better understanding of why the Barker Road access point is in its current condition.

Let me begin by saying that we are more than happy to meet with you regarding the issues discussed in this letter. We have met with several other interested parties at the bridge site including the WA Dept. of Ecology (DOE), WA State Parks and Recreation, Spokane River Forum, Spokane Conservation District, and WA Dept. of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW). After you have reviewed the information in this letter, feel free to contact me to set up a meeting.

Engineering Design of Access Lane
The biggest misunderstanding appears to be that an 'engineering design' was provided for access to the river. This is simply not the case. There was no 'engineering design' for an 'access lane'. There was no access lane envisioned at the time the bridge drawings were prepared.

Sheet R-7 of the design drawings simply indicates a 1 foot gravel cap to be placed over the existing river bank east of the bridge structure and within the existing public right-of-way.

Location of Bridge
You are correct in that during the initial stages of design we decided to shift the location of the new bridge as far west (downstream) as the existing Barker Road right-of-way

allowed. This was done to ensure there was as much space as possible between the east side of the new bridge and fence along the east right-of-way line at the northeast corner of the bridge. We wanted to ensure continued non-formal recreational access to the Spokane River.

Steep Embankment
The steep portion of the river bank was a result of unanticipated erosion. The erosion took place underneath the temporary work bridge over the course of two spring runoff periods. The extent of erosion was unknown until the temporary work bridge was removed at the end of the project.

Our bridge design consultant speculates that the erosion of the north bank was caused by higher than normal velocity along the river edge caused at least in part by construction related obstructions in the river (four 12-foot diameter steel casings at the new bridge piers, temporary work bridge support piles, and sheet piling around the previous bridge's in-river support piers) during high flow conditions. However, the construction methods used by the contractor were all pre-approved by WDFW through the issuance of an HPA permit.

Contaminated Sediment
You are correct in that DOE has identified this site as one of several public use sites along the banks of the Spokane River that contains contaminated sediment. However, the amount of contamination is not so high that public use of this access has had to be restricted or eliminated. DOE simply indicated that they would like to address this contamination by capping the existing soils. The contamination has not been considered to be a serious public hazard; otherwise it would be closed to the public, which it is not.

This gravel cap shown on drawing R-7 was being provided at the request of the WA Dept. of Ecology (DOE). The city agreed to assist with this capping effort within the limits of the bridge project. The specifications used for the gravel cap came from DOE. It was the same specification DOE had used on other public areas along the Spokane River. People reading the plans have mistakenly assumed that the gravel cap shown on the plans is an access lane but that was not the city's intent at the time the plans were developed.

Also, at the time the plans were prepared it was anticipated that DOE would be placing the remainder of the gravel cap after the completion of the bridge project. Therefore, construction note 2 was placed on plan sheet R-7 for the bridge contractor to coordinate this work with DOE. Unfortunately, DOE did not have funding for the remainder of the cap at the time the bridge was completed. It is our understanding that DOE may have funding now, or soon, to place the remaining gravel cap in this area.

Public Safety
Access is still available at the top of the existing slope next to the north bridge approach. The Fire Department has never used this access point to launch boats or drive their trucks down to the river. The river bank prior to the construction of the new bridge did not

allow this type of emergency access. The Fire Department does use this area for the launching of kayaks and will continue to do so even in its current condition.

Environmental Concerns
There were no environmental violations that occurred during the construction of the bridge that were not mitigated through agreement with the WDFW. The contractor did not release contaminated sediment into the river during construction. Erosion did occur beyond the control of the contractor as a result of the higher than normal volume and velocity in the river during the spring of 2009.

During the course of construction erosion was first noticed under the new bridge prior to the placement of the girders over the north span. There were concerns about continued erosion and eventually jeopardizing the embankment supporting the north bridge abutment. With city approval the contractor placed large boulders along the edge of the erosion for protection. This action did not result in a fine.

In cooperation with WDFW the city entered into a Mitigation Agreement in Principle that addressed 'perceived violations' of the HPA including "… erosion of the north bank during the spring runoff…" This allowed the project to continue past the original HPA expiration date. The Contractor also agreed to pay a mitigation fee to the Spokane Chapter of Trout Unlimited as part of this agreement. This was not a fine as stated in your letter.

Embankment Stability
With the construction related obstructions removed, the velocity of flow at the river's edge will be far less than what caused the erosion. It is our opinion that over the next several runoff years the eroded riverbank will slowly stabilize and will not become steeper. Over time the bank should fill back in to the original contour.

I trust this information is helpful in better understanding of the facts surrounding the current state of Barker Road access point. Again, please feel free to contact me at 720-5014 or sworley@spokanevalley.org if you would like to set up a time to meet.

Sincerely,

Steve M. Worley, P.E.
Senior Capital Projects Engineer

cc:
Mike Jackson, City Manager
Neil Kersten, Public Works Director
Cary Driskell, Acting City Attorney
Mike Stone, Parks & Recreation Director
Andy Dunau, Spokane River Forum
John Roland, WA Dept. of Ecology
Chris Guidotti, WA State Parks
Charlie Peterson, Spokane County Conservation District
Jeff Lawlor, WA Dept. of Fish and Wildlife