



e A S T B A N K

**EXPOSED**

Celebrating the Eastbank Esplanade:  
Portland's New Waterfront Experience

## For Immediate Release

Friday, May 25, 2001

### Eastbank Esplanade Phase I and II along with Steel Bridge Walkway and Public Boat Dock Open to the Public

**PROJECT BRINGS IMPORTANT NEW AMENITIES TO THE EASTSIDE AND UNITES  
BOTH SIDES OF RIVER IN A CONTINUOUS LOOP**

A dream that was included in the Central City Plan of 1988 has been realized today with the opening of Phases I and II of the Eastbank Esplanade, the completion of the Steel Bridge pedestrian and bicycle walkway and a new public boat dock. These projects, together, make it possible for walkers, cyclists and joggers to complete a riverside central city loop between the Steel and Hawthorne Bridges and provide an east-west connection for residents and visitors.

"On the advent of Portland's 150th birthday, I am thrilled we're giving ourselves the gift of reconnecting to the Willamette River, and reuniting the city's east and west sides," said Mayor Vera Katz. "I am excited for the Central Eastside, which has waited a long time to get its own waterfront park. The Esplanade will serve as a catalyst for the neighborhood's rebirth as a vibrant area for those who live and work here," Katz added.

Stretching from the Steel Bridge to the Hawthorne Bridge, the mile-long Eastbank Esplanade features a 1,200-foot floating walkway (the longest in the United States), a new public boat dock; by the Oregon Convention Center, river overlooks and cantilevered walkways, plazas, riverbank restoration, urban markers with lighting and interpretive panels, public art, and a new boat dock for the Eastbank fire station. The Esplanade is a joint project of the Portland Development Commission and Portland Parks and Recreation. Groundbreaking for the Esplanade was held in October 1998.

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## Eastbank Esplanade/Steel Bridge Walkway

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“This is a great day for Portland and an especially great day for the inner south-east neighborhoods, including the Central Eastside Industrial area, that have waited so long for access to the Willamette River,” said Commissioner Jim Francesconi. “Construction of the connection to the Springwater Corridor trail will begin next fall, and citizens even beyond our boundary will be able to bike, walk, or run from as far east as Boring to downtown Portland. This Esplanade is a wonderful addition to our parks system,” he added.

At the north end of the project, the new Steel Bridge pedestrian and bicycle walkway has been built on the lower deck of the Steel Bridge. The fully ADA accessible crossing allows pedestrians and cyclists to cross the bridge and arrive at grade with the Esplanade. From here, pedestrians and cyclists have the choice of continuing south along the Esplanade or going up a staircase or ramp, across a railroad bridge, and connecting with the overlook by the Oregon Convention Center and Rose Quarter. The public boat dock provides 600 linear feet of eastside tie-up access for both commercial and private vessels, including possible future use by river taxis. The City's Office of Transportation had oversight for the Steel Bridge pedestrian and bicycle crossing, the overlook connections and the public boat dock attached to the floating walkway.

“The walkway creates a direct northern connection between the Lloyd District and Old Town/Downtown for pedestrians and bicyclists,” remarked Commissioner Charlie Hales. “Portland was founded on the Willamette River for its transportation access. With the walkway and the new public boat dock, we are reclaiming the river as a transportation connection.”

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The Steel Bridge walkway project is part of the Office of Transportation's River Access and Transportation (RAT) Program, developed to encourage accessible and efficient transportation along the Willamette River. To use the Steel Bridge, Portland Transportation negotiated with Union Pacific Railroad Company, which owns and operates the bridge. Built in 1912, the Steel Bridge is eligible to be on the National Historic Register and is the only telescoping vertical lift span truss bridge in operation in America. The bridge has two decks, both with 220-foot lift spans. The new walkway on the lower deck does not affect the navigational clearance.

Funds for the Steel Bridge walkway, overlook, railroad bridge and public boat dock came from federal CMAQ funds (Congestion Mitigation Air Quality), tax increment funds from the Oregon Convention Center Urban Renewal Area, Oregon Department of Transportation, Oregon State Marine Board, Local Improvement District funds from area property owners, and the City's Office of Transportation.

Total project cost for the entire project is \$30 million:

Eastbank Esplanade Phase I and II	\$20 million
Steel Bridge walkway and boat dock	\$10 million

Funds for Phase I came primarily from tax increment funds from the Oregon Convention Center Urban Renewal Area. Funds for Phase II came from federal CMAQ funds and tax increment funds from the Central Eastside Urban Renewal Area.

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Final work to be completed on the Esplanade Phase II includes the completion of public parking lots at the south end of the project near the Hawthorne Bridge and improvements to S.E. Salmon, Main and Madison Streets from Water Avenue. These improvements are scheduled to be completed this August.

Phase III of the project is known as the “Crescent”—the three acre riverfront parcel between the Hawthorne and Marquam Bridges. Innovative design options are being considered by the team of OTAK and Martha Schwartz, Assoc. Features may include water fountains, paved plazas, a floating dock, boat ramps and a facility for light watercraft. As with the Esplanade’s earlier phases, Phase III will include extensive habitat restoration along the riverbank. The Portland Development Commission is evaluating funding alternatives to carry out this important final phase of the overall Esplanade.

Contact: Esplanade questions: Julie Rawls  
Portland Development Commission  
503.823.3294

Gay Greger  
Portland Parks and Recreation  
503.823.3315

Elisa Dozono  
Office of the Mayor  
503.823.3442

Steel Bridge walkway  
and boat dock: Mary Volm  
Office of Transportation  
503.823.7785

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