To Mayor LaMear & City Councilors,

On August 27, 1966, four years and two weeks after the project officially commenced, Oregon Governor Hatfield and Washington Governor Evans formally opened and dedicated the Astoria-Megler Bridge. They were assisted by Miss Oregon, Estrellita Schid; Miss Washington, Sandra Lee Marth; a delegation from Walldorf, Germany; Astoria Clowns; elected officials from both States; and 30,000 interested citizens.

Fifty years later, it is easy for us to take the bridge for granted.

The bridge was the final link in the long-desired Trans American Highway—a continuous, uninterrupted motor route between the Canadian and Mexican borders.

At the time of the construction, it was thought to be the longest continuous steel truss bridge in the world.

It represented an economic boost to NW Oregon and SW Washington.

The opening celebration marked an important development in our sister city relationship with Walldorf—the first time a full contingent of Walldorf representatives visited Astoria.

In a time of cynical opinions regarding our government the bridge also represents a promise made and a promise kept. Backers and elected officials promised the public the toll would be removed once the bridge was paid for.

Today, more than 6,000 vehicles cross the bridge each day—bringing tourists, friends and family, vital supplies, and goods to market.

At the time of completion, the newspaper claimed it was one of the most important milestones in the history of our community alongside Robert Gray’s voyage into the Columbia River, Lewis & Clark, and John Jacob Astor’s establishment of a fur trading outpost here. We came together as a community to commemorate the anniversaries of these and now it is time to celebrate the bridge.

The Clatsop County Historical Society has been planning, and already funded, an exciting and dynamic exhibit to tell the story of our bridge. As word of the exhibit got out, more and more interested parties started contacting us. Walldorf was anxious to know when their delegation should plan on coming over to help celebrate. ODOT was eager to explain what was going on and to help anyway they could. The Chamber of Commerce was wondering what to tell the people calling and asking about the 50th. The Long Beach Visitors Bureau wondered how to get involved—“it’s our bridge too.”

Earlier this year we convened a meeting of interested parties to see what we should do. Representatives from the Astoria-Warrenton Chamber of Commerce, Downtown Association, ODOT, Astoria School District, Regatta, the Sister City Committee, Columbia River Maritime Museum, and volunteers from other organizations began to meet and put a plan together.
While plans are still in development and fluid, key components include:

A recreation of the dedication and ribbon cutting to happen during the Regatta weekend. Waldorf has made reservations and plan on being there. Invitations to the Governors, Miss Oregon, Miss Washington, and other officials need to be sent as soon as possible.

A reunion of people who worked on building the bridge and their families. We have held some open houses to begin finding anyone still alive and the families of workers.

An engineering-day for the local schools. This might include a “balsa wood bridge building” contest.

Some sort of a free series of public programs that may include lectures, slide shows, and movies.

As plans are beginning to cement, and enthusiasm is growing, it is important to know we have the full support and endorsement of the City of Astoria. In addition, I’ve attached a proposed budget based on the components the committee has discussed. We request $9,500 from the Promote Astoria Fund to make 2016 the “year of the Bridge.” Thank you for your thoughtful consideration.

Cheers,

McAndrew Burns

Executive Director
Astoria-Megler Bridge 50th Anniversary Celebration

Budget – Estimate

December 2015

Reenactment – Opening Ceremony – to be held during Regatta - $1,000

Stage, sound, chairs – donated or rented?
Banner/signage - $250
Handouts/programs - $150
Reimburse gas for cars with dignitaries? - $100
Refreshments - $250
Official “Thank you” – dignitaries - $250

School Engineering Day - $2,000

Supplies - $750
Prizes - $1,000
Printed materials - $250

Lectures/Public Programs - $1,000

$250 a program – space, refreshments, honorariums, mileage, hotel, etc.

Workers Reunion - $1,000

Facility Rental, food, printed materials, memento

Marketing/Public Outreach - $4,500

Website - $2,500
Logo - $500
Advertising - $1,000
Misc. - $500

Any additional expenses to be paid for with private donations or sponsorships.