



Heritage Vancouver

www.heritagevancouver.org
info@heritagevancouver.org
604 254 9411

1020 Denman St PO Box 47036
Denman Place, Vancouver BC
V6G 3E1

July 21, 2015

Mayor Gregor Robertson and Vancouver City Council
Vancouver City Hall
453 West 12th Avenue
Vancouver, BC V5Y 1V4

Re: Burrard Bridge Rehabilitation

Dear Mayor & Council:

On behalf of the membership of Heritage Vancouver, we are writing to express our deepest concerns regarding the changes that have been proposed subsequent to the public consultation process for the Burrard Bridge Rehabilitation. These proposed additions were not a part of the consultation and planning process leading up to the project and as such they have not received the due care and attention that one of Vancouver's top Heritage Landmarks deserves.

This is our first and only opportunity to express our strongest opposition to these proposed interventions. It is our fear that these new interventions will irrevocably alter the appearance of this much loved landmark heritage structure. Not only would the end result be a severely compromised asset but it would also remain as an ongoing reminder to the people of Vancouver that our current civic government does not consider the maintenance of major heritage assets in a serious manner or engage with our citizens in a transparent and meaningful way. We feel that creating a prominent visual legacy to these negative views would be tragic considering the courageous undertaking by council to upgrade our heritage policies through the Heritage Action Plan.

The Burrard Bridge is one of Vancouver's most iconic structures and has been so from the time of its construction in 1932. It is also an internationally recognized masterpiece of the Art Deco style, and is one of the very few truly-realized Art Deco bridges in the world. The Burrard Bridge was designed as a dual gateway both from the waters of English Bay to False Creek and from Kitsilano to Downtown Vancouver. Critical heritage features include the distinctive towers and galleries that mark the midspan, historic lanterns at each end built to memorialize Canadian prisoners of war, and the concrete railing uniquely designed to blur out and disappear at speeds of 50 km/h. These features and the gateway experience bring 40,000 pedestrians per year strolling across the bridge as well as numerous cyclists and commuters, plus countless other tourists and Vancouverites viewing it from a distance.

Adding the means prevention fencing currently proposed will diminish, if not destroy, the pedestrian experience as well as the appearance of the bridge from afar. It will, in short, transform the bridge so that it is no longer recognizable as an iconic example of the Art Deco style in Vancouver.

The introduction of solid concrete vehicle containment barriers will also completely alter the experience and heritage character of the Burrard Bridge as the stroboscopic effect that made the railing all but disappear so as to provide uninterrupted views of the harbour at driving speed will be lost.

At this time we are calling for the proposed interventions to be rejected so that alternate solutions for means prevention and vehicle containment barriers can be found—solutions that not only follow best practice standards on conservation but also maintain the integrity of this major heritage asset for the people of Vancouver. Though we support the general intent of the project to repair the concrete railings, add bike lanes and widen the Pacific Boulevard intersection for safety reasons, Heritage Vancouver Society does not support the current proposed design interventions as it finds them unacceptable.

Under Vancouver's flexible Building Bylaw, exceptions and alternate compliance are allowed for heritage situations. The intent is to improve the existing situation while protecting heritage value. We call on Council to recognize and celebrate the unique heritage value of the Burrard Bridge and apply this logic to create a process that leads to an acceptable solution.

In addition, it is important to note that this project is silent on the upgrades of many other heritage features of the Burrard Bridge. These include addressing the deteriorating paint and plaques and the restoration of the original pedestrian lighting, the deteriorating braziers, and the north end staircases.

In conclusion, Heritage Vancouver Society does not support the current proposed design interventions and we call on Council to provide time for engagement with interested parties and the public regarding the elements that were added subsequent to the public consultation process on the Burrard Bridge Rehabilitation.

We strongly urge the City of Vancouver to remove the proposed means prevention fencing and concrete barriers from the Burrard Bridge Rehabilitation project until an acceptable heritage solution can be determined.

Yours truly,



Javier Campos, President
Heritage Vancouver Society

cc. Penny Ballem, City Manager
Brian Jackson, General Manager, Planning and Development
Members of the Heritage Commission
Marco D'Agostini, Senior Planner Heritage Group