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## **HARRODS CREEK BRIDGE SHOULD BE REPAIRED AND RE-OPENED** **Bridge Closing Unnecessary**

**Louisville, KY—(December 3, 2008)** Without warning to the public, The Louisville Metro Public Works Department abruptly closed and barricaded the Harrods Creek Bridge on Thanksgiving eve stopping through-traffic on the area's only state-designated Scenic Byway and causing major traffic problems on alternate routes. According to River Fields, a 50 year-old, regional conservation and preservation group, it could have been avoided.

### ***Simple Repair and Bridge Re-Opening Needed Immediately***

River Fields learned that the closure took place several days after an accident on the bridge. "Transportation officials should work 24/7, diligently and aggressively, to make the necessary repairs to the bridge so that it can be opened to the public as soon as possible. This will prevent more unnecessary cost and inconvenience for thousands of motorists," said Bob Kulp, President of River Field Board of Trustees "When there is an accident on the bridge, officials need to fix the bridge. When a car hits a guardrail the guardrail is repaired. Roads are not closed every time a guardrail is damaged. It is that simple."

Louisville Metro officials announced to the public that the bridge was closed because a guardrail was damaged. No other damage has been reported. Metro workers installed two lengthy guardrails across the road to stop traffic but did not repair the damaged guardrail. *(See photo of one of the two 25 foot guardrails the construction crews installed on Thanksgiving Eve.)*<sup>1</sup> No work has taken place on the bridge since the closing.

River Fields attorney agreed: "Since the closure, there has been a public outcry," said Don Cox, River Fields attorney and spokesperson. "River Fields has been the organization citing safety from the very beginning," he said "Eighteen months ago, River Fields wrote a letter to Ted Pullen, Director of Metro Public Works and Assets,

asking for repair of the guardrails. River Fields never received a response.<sup>2</sup> And the guardrails have not been properly maintained. The bridge should be repaired and re-opened as soon as possible to facilitate safe flow of traffic."

Gary Klein, Senior Principal of the Chicago firm of Wiss, Janney, Elstner and Associates, Inc, and a specialist in historic bridges, is a structural consultant for River Fields. Based on the information made public, and a review of the structure, he suggests that Metro Louisville only needed to replace the damaged guardrail and nothing else.

"Vehicular damage to bridge guardrails is a common occurrence. If transportation officials had used the very same guardrails to protect the public as they did to barricade the public from using the bridge, this entire situation could have been avoided." he said. "If guardrail repairs are installed (and assuming proper anchors are used), the safety of the bridge can be restored to an operating level comparable to the way it has been operating for the last several years."

### ***Maintenance Issues Ignored***

Klein said the approach railing was apparently further damaged by this reported accident because the railing was poorly anchored. Based on available information, River Fields and the Harrods Creek Boat Owners Association believe transportation officials have allowed the bridge to deteriorate when minimal, appropriate repairs could have prevented the closure. Additionally, all of River Fields educational materials on the bridge clearly warn that the guardrails need repair.

River Fields and four other community organizations-- the Harrods Creek Boat Owners Association, OPEN Louisville, the Wolf Pen Branch Preservation Association and the River Creek Homeowners Association, filed suit in federal court in May 2008 to stop a separate project - the controversial proposed widening of the same bridge. The suit claims that transportation officials did not look at prudent and feasible alternatives. These five organizations say the guardrails can be fixed, the bridge resurfaced and better signs added. This would cost only a fraction of the proposed \$2.5 million widening. "In a month when services and jobs are being cut by Metro government, why would officials choose the most expensive project and not manage this infrastructure responsibly?" Don Cox asked.



<sup>1</sup> *This photo shows the one of the two 25-foot guardrails built by Louisville Metro when they abruptly closed the Harrods Creek Bridge on Thanksgiving Eve. "They pounded iron spikes in the pavement and were able to construct a 50-foot guardrail to keep out the public but they refused to repair the guardrails that protect the public," said Don Cox, River Fields attorney. They are playing a game and the loser is the public. The Harrods Creek Bridge has a history of safety. The sudden bridge closing has forced traffic to detour to other roadways that are not equipped to handle that amount of traffic."*

<sup>2</sup>*Copies of these letters are available upon request*

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*River Fields is the largest and oldest river conservancy along the 981- mile Ohio River. For nearly 50 years, River Fields has utilized its resources to effectively protect, preserve and enhance the natural and cultural resources of the land and water around the Ohio River in our region. Through its programs of land conservation, advocacy, and education, River Fields strives to create harmony between nature, history and the people who live here. River Fields owns land or holds conservation easements on 34 properties, totaling more than 2,200 acres, most of which is preserved forever. River Fields is one of the nation's few land trusts tackling regional advocacy work and land conservation.*

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