Foreword

These *Standard Specifications for Road, Bridge, and Municipal Construction* have been developed to serve as a baseline for the work delivered to the public by the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT). The *Standard Specifications* are incorporated into the written agreement (Contract) between WSDOT as Contracting Agency and the Contractor, except where the Contract indicates that a particular specification has been amended or replaced with a special provision to resolve project-specific issues. The decision to amend or replace any standard specification with a special provision is made during the design process and is based upon the sound engineering judgment of the project designer.

These *Standard Specifications* reflect years of refinement through the literally hundreds of projects the Department delivers each year. In addition, the standards are the result of countless hours of development and review by both our internal WSDOT staff as well as our industry partners through the joint WSDOT/Associated General Contractors' Standing Committees.

Finally, these standards reflect the contracting philosophy and balance of risk-allocation that the Department has adopted through the years. We believe that this balance of risks provides us the lowest final cost solution to our transportation needs. For example, shifting risk to the Contractor can provide more certainty on final cost, but may result in higher initial cost. On the other hand, accepting more risk by the owner can result in lower initial costs, but less certainty on the final cost. We at the Department of Transportation believe that we have reached the optimum point of balance for risk, and we will continue to consider this balance on all future specification revisions.

The language above indicates that these specifications are to be used only as a guideline during the design process, and that is true. Once they have been incorporated into a Contract, however, they become the legal and enforceable language of that Contract. The *Standard Specifications*, the Amendments to the Standards, and the Project Special Provisions, along with any attachments in the Contract documents, define a Contract and are no longer seen as guidelines. Rather, they are the written agreement, subject to revision only through the change order process.

This preface is for informational purposes only and is not to be used to interpret or affect the terms.

Robert E. Christopher, P.E.
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