



November 24, 2020

Capital Projects Advisory Review Board
ATTN: Project Review Committee
PRC@des.wa.gov c/o Talia Baker, Administrative Support

RE: Tacoma Public Schools Application for Approval to Utilize Progressive D/B Project Delivery

Dear Members of the PRC:

Having recent design-bid-build and design-build experience with Tacoma Public Schools (TPS), I have a unique perspective from which to endorse approval of the Fawcett Elementary School as a progressive design-build project.

In Absher's experience, TPS has provided professional, quality management of both our Wilson High School (design-bid-build) and Hunt Middle School (design-build) projects. The projects differed greatly, however, in our ability to provide early advice, planning, and budgeting information. For example, on Wilson High School, TPS could not accept their desired alternate of a Music Building at the time of the bid due to budget constraints. Upon direction of the school board, the District ultimately added the building as a change order several months after the project began, pushing the schedule out by a full year. By contrast, on Hunt Middle School our design-build team was able to accommodate the scope the District had budget for and plan the infrastructure and connections for a desired future expansion. When TPS passed their bond measure during the Hunt project, we were able to seamlessly incorporate a 30,000 SF building, as well as athletic fields and track, while maintaining the original completion date.

Another way the progressive design-build process has benefited Tacoma Public Schools is through upgrades to the school. Due to the nature of the design-bid-build process, desired changes in materials or products during Wilson High School construction automatically resulted in change orders. However, at Hunt Middle School, our design-build team collaborated with the District to identify items they would like to have if the budget allowed. As we have realized budget savings and returned portions of unused contingency, we have already been able to upgrade countertops, siding, site fencing and several other elements that will give the school better durability and maintainability.

I hope this comparison has given you an idea of how TPS leverages design-build to achieve more reliable projects with maximized value to their students and the community. They have been a leader in expanding opportunities for local, women- and minority-owned and small businesses on their projects—which is made possible through the flexibility of the design-build process. Their staff is savvy and collaborates well with an integrated team to ensure success for everyone involved.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Curt Gimmestad".

Curt Gimmestad
Vice President, Absher Construction Company

CC: *Morris Aldridge, Tacoma Public Schools*