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TRI-CITIES VISITOR & CONVENTION BUREAU

Date: June 26, 2001
To: Environmental Protection Agency
From: Kris Watkins, President & CEO
Re: Support for B Reactor Museum

Kris Watkins

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The Tri-Cities Visitor and Convention Bureau wholeheartedly encourages the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection Agency to embrace decontamination efforts which ready the B Reactor complex to welcome visitors.

The B Reactor is an important historic landmark of the Atomic Age. As a museum, the B Reactor has broad appeal as both a heritage tourism and educational activity, with tours incorporating Site and community history. Combined with an excursion train, a B Reactor museum would showcase the historic Manhattan Project and Hanford's role in shaping world history. Hanford tours could even include "bi-modal" packages with passengers traveling to the B Reactor by train and returning via a jet boat tour of the Hanford Reach.

Nationwide there has been a surge of interest in areas of special importance to America's heritage. Primarily because there is a strong desire to understand the diversity of our country—the lifestyles, architecture, culture and industries of the various people who shaped our country's development. In order to understand the present, we must understand our past. It is important to know the places and events that have shaped and continue to affect our collective thinking. Creating a B Reactor museum would provide an opportunity to tell our community's unique story.

Indeed, the Hanford and Richland "story" consists of some of the richest, and most significant historical accomplishments in the world. It is the story of a community with a singular commitment to ending World War II, of the Manhattan Project, the world's first full-sized reactor, and the Hanford Reach—the last free-flowing, non-tidal stretch of the mighty Columbia River. It is the story of American Indian tradition, early farming techniques, and railroading. It is the story of environmental research and restoration. From the largest remaining shrub-steppe eco-system in the world, to an "Atomic City" built overnight—it is the story of sophisticated advancements carved from a rugged northwest territory. It is a unique story, and one that will capture the hearts and imaginations of all who visit.

Indeed, creating a B Reactor museum would greatly enhance the Tri-Cities current tourism "package" and complement the efforts of the Columbia River Exhibition of History, Science and Technology (CREHST) museum, the B Reactor Museum Association, The Washington State Railroad Historical Society, and the Hanford Reach National Monument Advisory Committee. In addition to significant visitor spending, tourism activities position the Tri-Cities as an active, vibrant, healthy community and a great place to do business — supporting diversification efforts of the region's economic development partners.

The Tri-Cities Visitor and Convention Bureau, which represents more than 450 business members, wholeheartedly endorses a decontamination strategy which allows public access and facilitates a reactor complex ready for visitors.

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