



BRIDGE REPLACEMENT PROJECT

April 16, 2021

Senator Betsy Johnson, Co-Chair
Senator Elizabeth Steiner-Hayward, Co-Chair
Representative Dan Rayfield, Co-Chair Joint Committee on Ways and Means
Oregon State Legislature
900 Court St. NE
Salem, OR 97301

Co-Chair Johnson, Co-Chair Steiner-Hayward, Co-Chair Rayfield and Members of the Committee:

I am writing to support the Port of Hood River's request to the Oregon Legislature for \$5-million to help fund Phase 2 of the Hood River/White Salmon Interstate Bridge replacement project. As a fourth-generation fruit grower and small business owner, I know first-hand the importance of the bridge for moving produce from farm to market. Though the Columbia River separates both states, the region is very much connected economically and culturally.

The current bridge is nearly one-hundred years old. The lanes are sub-standard for commercial traffic, the horizontal clearance for maritime traffic is too narrow, the bridge is not seismically resilient, and the cost to maintain this aging structure totals hundreds of thousands of dollars every year. It makes much more sense for that money to be spent on a new bridge than maintaining an old bridge.

With over four-million crossings every year and tens of thousands of people and businesses dependent on this key crossing, I would advocate for continued stated funding to complete engineering, financial and governance studies for bridge replacement. With contributions from Washington state and the federal government, Oregon's investment would be no more than a third of the cost.

As both a commercial fruit grower and locally elected official, I appreciate your consideration of our request.

Sincerely,

Bob Benton, Commissioner
HOOD RIVER COUNTY
601 State Street
Hood River, OR 97031
(541) 490-8275