



AMERICAN COUNCIL OF ENGINEERING COMPANIES OF OREGON

“The Engineers”

Testimony on Interstate Bridge Replacement Project HB 2098-2

Joint Committee on Transportation, April 20, 2023

I am Karen Tatman, a practicing Engineer, here representing the American Council of Engineering Companies of Oregon. (ACEC Oregon), a professional organization representing 120 engineering companies with 5,000 employees. I am a previous Board President and I currently serve as Oregon’s representative to ACEC National.

I am honored and pleased to have this opportunity to add ACEC’s strong support for the Interstate Bridge Replacement project. ACEC has long supported public infrastructure investments and we proactively supported the HB 2017 transportation package.

We also proactively support resiliency, which is greatly needed in the new significant bridge structure connecting Oregon, Washington and beyond. Interstate 5 is a critical link that supports regional and national commerce, recreational travel and our state’s economy. Resiliency relates to withstanding catastrophic events, but a new bridge also reduces congestion, improves safety, and improves opportunity for so many well into the future. We need a new bridge that is seismically resilient, meets today’s and tomorrow’s transportation needs, and provides safe and efficient modes of travel, including transit, trucks, cars, bikes, boats, airplanes and more.

I’m not telling you anything you don’t already know. The current bridge is old, inadequate for today’s transportation needs, and it’s vulnerable, especially to seismic events. The oldest span is more than 100 years old. In engineering, we observe that most people take systems for granted and a working I-5 bridge across the Columbia River is no different. It’ll keep working until all of a sudden it doesn’t work anymore. The cost of doing nothing is tangible and growing, especially to the 150,000+ vehicles that cross it each weekday.

As you enter / exit this capital building and see the tremendous effort being made to make sure it can withstand an earthquake, you are impressed by the importance of this type of work and its complexities. Providing that same level of assurance to our economy, our citizens, commuters, the people who deliver goods, and everyone who plays a role in making Oregon work is equally, or perhaps even more, important than any single building that can remain standing.

As an engineering industry, we’ve been talking about this bridge for more than 10 years. It’s time to make it happen. We know you’re on a path and you have support from The Engineers. ACEC Oregon and the engineering consultant community are ready and able to deliver a new bridge and all the additional work associated with the I-5 interchanges and local road network.

Of course, it is important that the project design work is inclusive and available to woman and minority-owned businesses and emerging small businesses. The passage of Senate Bill 848 which is currently in Ways and Means will help ensure this is the case.

Thank you for your hard work and commitment to this important project. This is the project of our generation and one that we all will look at as the moment we began to ensure a viable and visionary future for all.