



Hood River – White Salmon BRIDGE REPLACEMENT PROJECT

January 4, 2023

Senator Chris Gorsek
Senator Elizabeth Steiner
Representative Susan McLain
Representative Tanya Sanchez
Oregon State Legislature
900 Court Street NE
Salem, OR 97301-3871

RE: Support Funding for Hood River-White Salmon Replacement Bridge Project

Joint Ways and Means Committee Co-Chairs Steiner and Sanchez, and Joint Transportation Committee Co-Chairs Gorsek and McLain:

We write today to express support for allocating \$125 million to fund the completion of the Hood River-White Salmon Replacement Bridge Project.

The Hood River Bridge has been connecting people in Oregon and Washington for nearly one hundred years and is an essential piece of infrastructure for the individuals who use it every day. However, the current bridge is functionally obsolete, weight-restricted, seismically deficient, and a hazard for maritime freight on the Columbia River. The Hood River-White Salmon Interstate Bridge Replacement project has been the #1 economic development priority in the Mid-Columbia region for many years. The link provided by the bridge proved vital in the creation of a strong tech sector across state boundaries in this rural region, and it serves as a critical connection for our state's agriculture sector. Replacing the Hood River-White Salmon Bridge is vital to the local economy, and to the safety of surrounding communities in both Oregon and Washington.

Repair costs for the current bridge continue to grow year over year, with the most recent Sufficiency Rating of the bridge being reduced to 6, on a scale of 100. Unless construction on a new bridge is underway by 2027, \$57 million will need to be spent on the current bridge over the next ten years to provide for its continued safe operation. Design and engineering work for the Replacement Bridge Project must be completed by Q2 of 2026 to begin construction by Q1 of 2027, and any delays or stoppages of design and engineering work due to lack of available funds will increase project costs and require additional spending on repair and maintenance of the existing bridge.

The Replacement Bridge Project has an estimate of \$500 million, which includes 30% contingency and 4% for inflation – compounded yearly. To date, \$95 million in funding has been awarded - Oregon (\$10M), Washington (\$80M), and federal grants (\$5M). There are additional federal funding grant opportunities (\$295M) and a portion of the

existing bridges tolling revenue has been reserved for local investment in the bridge replacement.

With early funds, the Port of Hood River hired HNTB as the project manager and is working to complete early design and engineering work. The bridge design and location has been determined and the Coast Guard has approved the height of the bridge. An environmental impact study from ODOT is expected to be approved NOAN by the end of the year. HNTB will perform an evaluation to optimize existing and future toll revenue that will include the evaluation and implementation of a toll increase in July of 2023 with 100% of the toll revenue increase going toward the new bridge.

As our state focuses on resilience, prosperity for rural communities, and efficient and safe transportation systems, this project provides an immediate opportunity to advance those goals. The current national focus on upgrading infrastructure presents our state with a unique opportunity to make much needed regional investments. In your decisions about funding transportation resources, please remember this region's critical need for local, state and federal funding for the Hood River-White Salmon Interstate Bridge replacement project. It is the Region's highest priority.

Respectfully,

Bi-State Working Group Members



Catherine Kiewit, Mayor
City of Bingen



Mike Fox, Commissioner
Port of Hood River



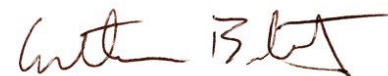
Marla Keethler, Mayor
City of White Salmon



Kate McBride, Mayor
City of Hood River



Jake Anderson, Commissioner
Klickitat County



Arthur Babitz, Commissioner
Hood River County

cc: Senate President Rob Wagner
Senate Republican Leader Tim Knopp
Senate Democrat Leader Kate Lieber
Speaker of the House Dan Rayfield
House Republican Leader Vicki Breese Iverson
House Democrat Leader Julie Fahey