

To: Co-chairs Frederick and McLain

Joint Committee on Transportation

April 26, 2023

Vote no on HB 2098-2

Co-chairs and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to speak about HB 2098. It is important that all voices be heard if we are to get the new bridge right. And funding is critical.

Observers of the process have been lead to believe that there is only one path and that the urgency for securing federal money depends on passing this bill, HB 2098-2. This is not true.

The bottom line is we need a bill committing to the bridge project and allocating funds before May 5th, 2023, in order to be in line for substantial federal funding. But it would not be prudent to commit to funding via General Obligation (GO) bonds.

Oregon legislators could allocate the money from dedicated highway tax revenue funds rather than relying on scarce general funds.

The bill as written ties us to \$1 Billion in GO bonds unnecessarily. Washington State has pledged a billion dollars for this project, but is allocating \$300M to begin with. Oregon legislators could follow the same “pledge and allocate” model and find the amount needed in highway tax revenues instead of the general fund.

Changing HB2098 opens up the possibility of finding more palatable funding options.

Language tying project funding to GO bonds needs to be removed from the bill to open things up to more flexible options for funding. Revenues for the next few biennia will become clearer as time goes on, as will exact costs of each project phase.

ODOT’s design for the bridge project may not be the best we can do, and may also herald a disaster.

A variety of voices have jumped in to point out the failings of the current plan, including the Coast Guard, 1000 Friends of Oregon, Just Crossing Alliance’s Right Size Right Now Campaign and many more. Joe Cortright of City Observatory has written extensively on the project, comparing it in detail to the failed Columbia River Crossing (CRC) and his reports are telling. In this [piece](#), he critiques the financial plan behind the project which is informing HB 2098-2. In another piece addressing [16 major concerns](#) with the project, Cortright exposes more than enough to make a responsible person question the project’s direction, including the lack of an Investment Grade Analysis, and lack of adequate oversight, similar to the situation which led to all the problems with the plan ten years ago. Apparently no one listened then. Is anyone listening now?

Thank you for the opportunity to express my thoughts; and please vote no on HB 2098-2.

Arlene Sherrett