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**Re: Support HB 2098-2**

Co-Chairs Frederick and McLain and Members of the Joint Committee:

Knife River Corporation is one of Oregon's largest highway construction contractors and suppliers of concrete, aggregates, and asphalt. Knife River builds the highways, schools, bridges, bike paths, streets, sidewalks, and water treatment plants your communities use every day. We do it with a team of 1,500 skilled construction workers, engineers, truckers, and equipment operators in Oregon and Washington. We do it with both union and open-shop labor. And we do it with Knife River's four core commitments in mind: People, Safety, Quality, and the Environment.

The safety risks and congestion concerns with the existing archaic bridges are obvious and well-documented. The existing bridges are a tax on our region's economy. If we can't move goods efficiently, we can't build the housing and other infrastructure this region needs at a price we can afford. It's that simple.

In 2013, the same coalition of opponents, aided and abetted by members of the Washington legislature, came together to scuttle the effort to replace these bridges. We had the chance then to replace these bridges in a lower inflationary, lower cost economic environment. Opponents would have Oregon kick that can down the road - *again*. In doing so, this legislative body would pass up the window for federal investment – *again*. HB 2098-2 puts Oregon and Washington in line to leverage a once-in-a-generation federal infrastructure investment. And timing is critical. To leverage this federal investment and maximize contracting opportunities, HB 2098-2 must be passed now. This funding cannot wait until the close of session budget bill.

Just as in 2013, Legislature has two routes to get to the same outcome. Either act now and fund and build the bridge we need or build it in the horrific aftermath of a seismic event after the twisted steel and crushed, occupied vehicles are removed from the bottom of the Columbia River. Either way, a new bridge gets built, and it should be on this Legislature's terms. Our partners in Washington have stepped up. It is Oregon's turn. Act now.

We respectfully urge the committee to approve HB 2098-2.