

TRAVIS NELSON
STATE REPRESENTATIVE
HOUSE DISTRICT 44
NORTH/NORTHEAST PORTLAND



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Testimony in Support of HB 2098 -3

May 4, 2023

Chairs McClain and Frederick, Vice Chairs Boshart-Davis and Boquist, Members of the Committee,

My name is Travis Nelson, State Representative for House District 44, representing North Portland, Hayden Island, and the community most directly impacted by this project. I support replacing the bridge and building mass transit service through my district. I am here today to voice my support for ensuring that my community and my constituents benefit from this tremendous multi-billion dollar public investment in the replacement of the Interstate Bridge. I want to add my support for House Bill 2098 with the - 3 Amendment by Rep. Pham specifically addressing the need for Project Labor Agreements and Community Benefits Agreements on this multi-billion dollar public project so that this investment can reap returns for Oregonians for generations to come.

Project Labor Agreements (PLA) were first used on the big public works projects of the 1930s. Grand Coulee Dam, Hoover Dam, and Shasta Dam all were built using PLAs. The Interstate Bridge is a similar New Deal style investment that should continue this tradition. Studies show that PLAs are the best way to guarantee that the benefits of major public infrastructure investments are shared by Oregon’s working families and the broader community, particularly BIPOC Oregonians. As the Oregon Commission on Black Affairs and BOLI found in a joint study in 2015, PLAs are a *solution* for increasing job opportunities for African Americans and women in the Construction Trades in Oregon.¹ A 2021 Report from the University of Oregon has similar findings that “participation in a union apprenticeship program improved wages, retention, and graduation rates for apprentices across the board as compared to non-union apprenticeship programs. These improvements in outcomes were particularly steep for BIPOC and women.”²

We need to invest in pathways not just to jobs, but to family wage careers, especially for those young people who cannot afford decades of debt for a college education. I would not be here before you today with a successful career in nursing had doors not been opened for me. I am here in the legislature to hold those doors open for others. That what this bridge project can do if we build it with PLAs.

In recent years, PLAs have been expanded to include requirements for community benefits beyond simply setting standards for construction employment; these expanded PLAs are called “Community Benefits Agreements.” The goal of a CBA is to maximize return on government investment by generating jobs and contracts for local businesses - like minority owned, veteran owned, or neighborhood businesses. CBA’s have also been used to address the negative impacts of development on a neighborhood, making sure that negative impacts are countered with necessary improvements and investments that can ensure the benefits are shared.

¹ [Labor Agreements as a Solution report final_061515_Zenthoefer.pdf \(oregon.gov\)](#)

² [Constructing A Diverse Workforce.pdf \(bpb-us-e1.wpmucdn.com\)](#)

For example, with the development of Staples Center in Los Angeles, a coalition of residents, labor groups and 30 different community organizations brokered a CBA for an adjacent entertainment district that included set asides for 20 percent affordable housing, \$1 million for parks and recreational facilities for residents, and living wages for 70 percent of the jobs created by the development.³

With the redevelopment of the Hill District in Pittsburgh, a coalition representing some 100 community groups, unions, churches, local businesses and residents in this African-American neighborhood brokered the city's first CBA and provided \$8.3 million in neighborhood improvements and called specifically for the development of a grocery store and youth center.⁴

This is the kind of approach we should be taking with the Interstate Bridge Replacement. We can ensure that this investment will support addressing our housing crisis, building a thriving corridor along the new light rail line, and making the natural beauty of the Columbia River accessible and enjoyable for all. That's what the language in the -3 can do.

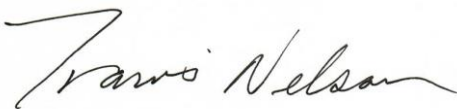
With big box stores on Jantzen Beach closing, the area needs investments that will uplift our community. My constituents need at least one grocery store on the island. We also need a local access bridge to Portland so that Hayden Island residents - many of whom are seniors - can get to doctor's appointments and run errands off-island without going onto I5. We're pleased to see that the local bridge is in the LPA and this must remain part of the overall plan for this project.

My district is home to the footprint of this bridge. My constituents, particularly on Hayden Island, are the ones who will endure years of construction noise, breathe the polluted air of increased diesel truck traffic, and to be clear - some of them will even be displaced from their homes, permanently.

I am here to say for the record that Hayden Island must be at the table, and must have a voice in this, and we must structure this deal this so my community benefits from this investment, rather than be harmed by it. A PLA and Community Benefits Agreement could ensure that the billions of dollars we're investing in replacing the bridge are not just building a new bridge but building the wealth and health of our communities for generations to come.

Thank you for the work you have done to advance this over many years, and for hearing my testimony this evening.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Travis Nelson". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

State Representative Travis Nelson
House District 44, North/NE Portland

³ [Five community benefits agreements that worked - The Chicago Reporter](#)

⁴ Id.