

May 16, 2023

Subject: HB 3622, Local Bridge Funding Package

Chairs Frederick and McLain, Vice-Chairs Boquist and Boshart-Davis, Members of the Joint Transportation Committee:

We write today to express our support for HB 3622, which would provide important financial support for Multnomah County's Earthquake Ready Burnside Bridge project and other important local bridges in our state. Oregon's aging infrastructure is struggling to keep pace with the transportation needs of our growing state today, and are ill-equipped to support our community after a major earthquake, which could hit at any time. Local and state bridges are interconnected and both play an integral role in ensuring a reliable and efficient statewide transportation system. Funding these local bridges now is critical to the resiliency and sustainability of Oregon.

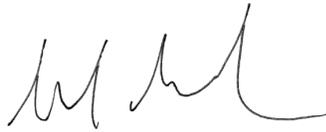
If funded, these bridges will play a critical role in community safety, response, and economic recovery after a major earthquake, provide numerous jobs in the bridges' respective regions, and move the Portland Metro region closer to its safety and multi-modal transportation goals.

Making the Burnside Bridge seismically resilient will improve the reliability of the nearly 19-mile Burnside Street regional Emergency Transportation Route, which stretches from Washington County to Gresham across the heart of the metro region, and plays an instrumental role in the overall transportation system. Oregon's largest metro region and statewide economic driver currently does not have a downtown bridge that will be usable immediately after a major earthquake. The Pacific Northwest regularly experiences some of the largest earthquakes in the world along the Cascadia Subduction Zone (CSZ). Geologists estimate there is a one in three chance that a CSZ earthquake with a magnitude of 8+ will strike the Portland region in the next 50 years. Completion of Multnomah County's Earthquake Ready Burnside Bridge project will ensure at least one downtown bridge will be available to emergency responders after a major earthquake. The Bridge of the Gods retrofits and a new Hood River-White Salmon bridge will provide similar benefits to Columbia River Gorge communities.

Along with future benefits following a natural disaster, the Earthquake Ready Burnside Bridge project would improve mobility options by including safer and enhanced pedestrian, ADA and bicycle facilities and the option to build a new streetcar line. Multimodal transportation is key to meeting our state's climate goals.

These projects are also expected to promote short and long-term job creation as the project is expected to generate over 6,000 job-years of employment in the State of Oregon. Many of those employees could be apprentices getting valuable on the job training, including many women and people of color. In the long-term, this could help the Metro region have a more diverse pool of candidates to hire on future transportation infrastructure projects and support both Multnomah County and the Metro Regional Government's goals in diversity, equity, and inclusion.

We urge your support of HB 3622, which supports the replacement of the current 97-year-old Burnside Bridge and work being done on other similar locally owned bridges. These projects offer a once in a lifetime infrastructure opportunity. Together they help protect Oregon from the full impacts of a major disaster, foster its ability to recover after the earthquake and ensure that the state has more reliable and future-ready bridges.



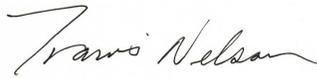
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