

**Testimony to the Joint Committee on Transportation
on House Bill 3622**

May 17, 2023

**Jacqui Treiger, Campaign Manager: Climate and Transportation
Oregon Environmental Council**

Founded in 1968, the Oregon Environmental Council (OEC) is a nonprofit, nonpartisan, membership-based organization. We advance innovative, collaborative and equitable solutions to Oregon's environmental challenges for today and future generations.

Dear 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 the Hood River White Salmon Interstate Bridge, the Bridge of the Gods, and the Earthquake Ready Burnside Bridge project. Our aging infrastructure is struggling to keep pace with the multimodal transportation needs of our growing community today, and are unequipped to support our community after a major earthquake, which could hit at any time. Our bridges are interconnected and play an integral role in ensuring a reliable and efficient statewide transportation system. Funding our local bridges now is critical to the resiliency and sustainability of our growing and working communities.

The Hood River White Salmon Interstate bridge, in its current condition, is designated functionally obsolete and has no bicycle or pedestrian capacity. For safety reasons, bicycles and pedestrians are prohibited from crossing the bridge, leaving no other crossing opportunities along a 44-mile stretch of river. The bridge connects rural and largely disadvantaged communities on both sides of the river and provides critical access to federally designated tribal fishing sites at the north end of the bridge. As one of only three bridges spanning the Columbia River in the region, it is critical that it is safe to cross and we hope that with this investment biking and walking infrastructure is added.

The Bridge of the Gods is an important connector of Oregon and Washington. This funding makes it possible to perform needed improvements as identified by the analysis, as well as prepare for needed strengthening of the Bridge structure, in preparation for adding a safe passageway for pedestrians and bicyclists to cross over the Columbia River.

The Burnside Bridge is designated an official emergency transportation route and currently Portland does not have a downtown bridge that will be usable immediately after a major earthquake. Geologists estimate there is a one in three chance that a CSZ earthquake with a



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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 that we have at least one downtown bridge that emergency responders can use after a major earthquake. 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 opportunity to build a new streetcar line, while creating over 6,000 jobs. If funded, this project will play a critical role in community safety, response, and economic recovery after a major earthquake, provide numerous jobs in the Portland Metro Region, and move this region closer to its safety and multi-modal transportation goals.

We urge your support of HB 3622. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

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