

February 7, 2024

Dear Oregon Legislators,


The Columbia River Gorge Commission is submitting a strong and enthusiastic letter of support for the Port of Cascade Locks seismic strengthening project on the Bridge of the Gods. The Bridge is a vitally important link for our bistate region. Since 1926 the Bridge has provided reliable and safe passage for passenger and commercial traffic and has played a key role in helping the Columbia Gorge region develop a strong economy. It is the only river crossing between Troutdale/ Vancouver and Hood River/White Salmon. It is critical to commercial and recreational vehicular traffic, as well as non-motorized travelers within the recreation-rich Columbia Gorge National Scenic Area. In addition, it serves as an escape route in case of fires, as we experienced in 2017 with the Eagle Creek Fire.

The Columbia River Gorge Commission (the Commission) is a bi-state compact agency serving Oregon and Washington and responsible for the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area, established by Congress in 1986 through the National Scenic Area Act. As the stewards of the Gorge, we protect its natural, cultural, recreation and scenic values and resources. In addition, we support and encourage economic development that is compatible with protection of the resources. Because the Gorge Commission supports economic vitality as well as recreation access, the Bridge of the Gods is an important link connecting two states, as well as trails on both sides of the Columbia River and is heavily used on a daily basis for commerce, commuting and visitors. In order to continue to provide safe passage, it requires significant reinforcement.

The Port requests \$6 million to perform a detailed structural analysis of the Bridge focused on improving its resiliency in the event of a major seismic event, and identification of a few key preservation upgrades to extend its usable life. The study will also explore the feasibility of adding a safe passageway for pedestrians and bicyclists to cross over the Columbia River.

The Gorge Commission supports the Port's request to the Oregon Legislature for \$6 million in funding for this project. This important investment for transportation infrastructure will produce an excellent return on investment. The Port of Cascade Locks is an important community partner with the Columbia River Gorge Commission and has a vital role in both our commercial and recreational economy within our bi-state region. Their request is consistent with the Commission's mission of responsible and safe development of the Columbia River Gorge and we are pleased to endorse this request.

Sincerely,



Krystyna U. Wolniakowski
Executive Director
Columbia River Gorge Commission

Cc: Dan Mahr, Port of Cascade Locks