

Co-Chairs and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today in support of House Bill 2184. For the record, my name is Mike Fox, co-chair of the Hood River-White Salmon Bridge Authority. The Authority is a bi-state commission of twelve members—six from Oregon and six from Washington—appointed by Hood River and Klickitat Counties. We are the governing body responsible for developing, constructing, operating, tolling, and financing a new Hood River-White Salmon Bridge.

We're here today to express our united and urgent support for the bridge funding bill before you.

Most of you have crossed the old bridge yourselves—perhaps gripping the wheel a little tighter as a semi passes just inches away in the opposite lane. You've seen firsthand the condition of the bridge, which was built in 1924 for cattle and Model Ts—not for the demands of today's traffic, commerce, or safety standards.

The current bridge is too narrow, with no shoulders or space for emergency vehicles, let alone bikes and pedestrians. At just 9½ feet per lane, trucks routinely straddle the centerline. It's weight-restricted, unable to handle modern freight, and poses growing safety and mobility risks. We've long known it wasn't built to withstand a major earthquake—but recent geotechnical surveys revealed that many of its foundations aren't even anchored to bedrock. Instead, they rest in compacted gravel now known to be vulnerable to liquefaction. Out of a score of 100, ODOT's sufficiency rating for this bridge is a 7.

Maintenance costs for a bridge of this age are only rising. Even simple repairs are costly and increasingly disruptive, requiring closures that sever vital daily connections: families from daycare, workers from jobs, businesses from customers and supply chains. The impact is regional, felt on both sides of the river well beyond the Gorge.

Despite ongoing repairs, the bridge has outlived its intended lifespan. It's corroding, costly to maintain, and each year brings a greater risk of failure. We are far past the point of asking whether a replacement is needed. The question now is whether we'll act in time to prevent a bridge failure.

The good news: the project is nearing completion of environmental review, and recently passed the 15% design milestone and negotiation is underway to advance to design completion. The replacement effort has strong, near-unanimous, bi-state support from local governments, businesses, and residents. We've secured

significant federal funding, and contributions from both Oregon and Washington. What remains is a final funding gap that must be closed to move into construction.

House Bill 2184 would provide Oregon's full state match—critical for unlocking Washington's remaining share and positioning us to secure the final piece of federal construction funding.

Your support for House Bill 2184 is more than just a financial match—it's the key to delivering a bridge that meets today's needs and tomorrow's opportunities. A modern replacement will remove a critical freight bottleneck, strengthen rural economies, and support the industries—agriculture, recreation, small business—that define the Gorge. It will, for the first time, provide safe access for bikes and pedestrians, connecting communities in ways the current bridge never could. This isn't just a fix for an aging structure—it's a transformational investment in the future of the region.

Thank you for your consideration.