

**TRAVIS NELSON**  
**STATE REPRESENTATIVE**  
HOUSE DISTRICT 44  
NORTH/NORTHEAST PORTLAND



**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**  
**Testimony in Support for House Bill 2749**

Co-Chairs Gorsek and McLain, Vice-Chairs Starr and Boshart Davis, and Members of the Joint Committee on Transportation.

For the record, my name is Travis Nelson, and I have the honor of serving as the State Representative for House District 44, North and Northeast Portland. I am here in support for HB 2749 because ensuring safe routes off the North Portland peninsula is about more than infrastructure. This is about real survival for Oregonians living in this region.

In North Portland, we are sitting on a ticking time bomb. Scientists agree that the “Big One”, a Cascadia subduction zone earthquake, is not a matter of if, but when. When it hits, it is projected to be the most devastating natural disaster in North American history, and the communities I represent will likely be among the hardest hit.

Right now, over 30,000 Oregonians living and working on the North Portland Peninsula, which includes: the St. Johns, Cathedral Park, Rivergate and beyond are depending on key bridges as emergency lifelines. When the BIG ONE strikes, these bridges are projected to collapse. That could mean no emergency access. No ambulances. No food or medical supply routes. No way in or out for families and workers at the ports. These neighborhoods would be cut off completely.

We also know that liquefaction in areas north of the Columbia Slough may make the ground unstable for rescue vehicles and if the CEI Hub is damaged, we’re looking at toxic smoke and an environmental catastrophe layered on top of the destruction.

There are two bridges designated as emergency routes for this community: The Lombard bridge owned by the BNSF railroad and the Columbia Boulevard bridge owned by PBOT. The best emergency route option is the Lombard bridge since it is outside of the projected liquefaction zone. The community has asked BNSF to take steps to ensure their bridge is seismically sound but there has been no commitment from them to address the structural issues with their bridge.

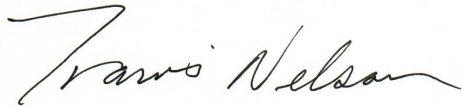
This is one reason we decided to focus on advocating for replacement of the Columbia Boulevard bridge. The N Columbia Blvd is a street of statewide and national significance given its designation as the only east-west National Highway Freight Route serving the Columbia Corridor, the largest industrial area in the State of Oregon. This is the only bridge over the BNSF Railroad Cut that is publicly owned as the other three are owned by BNSF Railroad. The bridge is made up of two parallel structures, one built in 1909 and the other built in 1968. Both of the structures are well past the end of their design lives, are in poor condition and are seismically vulnerable. PBOT and the City of Portland have been supportive of working with this community to ensure that they are not stranded when an earthquake hits.

HB 2749 provides \$5 million to get us to 30% design for a new, resilient Columbia Boulevard bridge, which is an essential first step that unlocks the door for federal funding. Without this investment, we cannot competitively compete for the grants needed to get this built.

We owe it to the families of North Portland and to all Oregonians to act before a disaster strikes. The failure to act now risks compounding tragedy later. And remember, it is not if it will, it is when.

Folks who live and work in this community care about this issue. When I last checked, there were over 100 written testimonies in support, and I encourage the committee to read through their stories.

Please support HB 2749 and move it out of committee. Thank you.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Travis Nelson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Travis" and last name "Nelson" clearly distinguishable.

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