

BEFORE THE JOINT COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

– **HB 2749**



14 April 2025

Co-Chair Senator Chris Gorsek

Co-Chair Representative Susan McLain

Co-Vice Chair Senator Bruce Starr

Co-Vice Chair Representative Shelley Boshart Davis

Members of the Committee

Total support for HB 2749, noting that serious clarifications are needed

Our concern:

Today Committee Leadership hosted an excellent interaction with Reps Nelson and Frederick, and the informed public advocates like Ms Donna Cohen.

In the interest of also supporting a language improvement to HB 2749, important factors must be considered, along with recent setbacks from Administration EOs.

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Factors

- Proceeding West to East, the first Columbia Blvd overpass spans a roadway, the second spans rail traffic in the cut. These spans are in a “series” relationship not parallel. This means if only one fails, emergency egress is rendered impossible, accounting for the Columbia bridge cost estimate at 2x each of the other 3 bridges.
- Whoever thinks only one egress bridge project is safe enough, safety is served by designing for fault tolerance. Single fault tolerance means that one overpass can fail and egress is still served. It is a tragic compromise of safety best practice to plan for only one project. This compromise must be challenged in the public interest.
- By far the absolute worst public safety compromise is the decision to deliver all Washington State refinery products to Portland (90% of Oregon demand) with a single pipeline. No one in Oregon made this decision. Nor is anyone in Oregon representing Oregon challenging it.

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Factors

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- Rep Gamba questioned the extent of resilience that can be attained by seismically resilient bridge design. Two design requirements must be asserted
 - The Columbia Blvd Bridge must serve commercial traffic following a M8 event. This Cascadia event has an average repeat interval of 246 years, and chances today are 4 out of 5 (5 out of 6 is called roulette). Our analysis has not been disputed.
 - The Columbia Blvd Bridge must serve commercial traffic following a M9 event. This Cascadia event has an average repeat interval of 400 to 500 years (still possible today)
- Rep Boshart-Davis emphasized the importance of stipulating parameters as part of JTC legislation on this matter
 - The Committee should review cost estimates for a M8 design and a M9 design. Are Legislators empowered to accept risk on behalf of the public they represent, without a vote?

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Setbacks

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What ODOT says about IRA and IIJA intercepted funding:

“Bridge funding provided under the IIJA is one of the types of funds for which all new obligations are on hold.”

<https://www.oregon.gov/odot/about/pages/federal-funding-eo-pause.aspx>

- This means we are on our own for public safety, indefinitely, and illegally
- OregonLive has reported the extent of this financial disaster so far, [in Billions](#), only considering currently intercepted appropriations
- [Our Burnside Bridge project is postponed](#), likely indefinitely
 - “The lack of federal grants coming to the bridge project is unrelated to federal funding freezes seen in some programs under the Trump administration, Henrichsen said.” Why is this believable?

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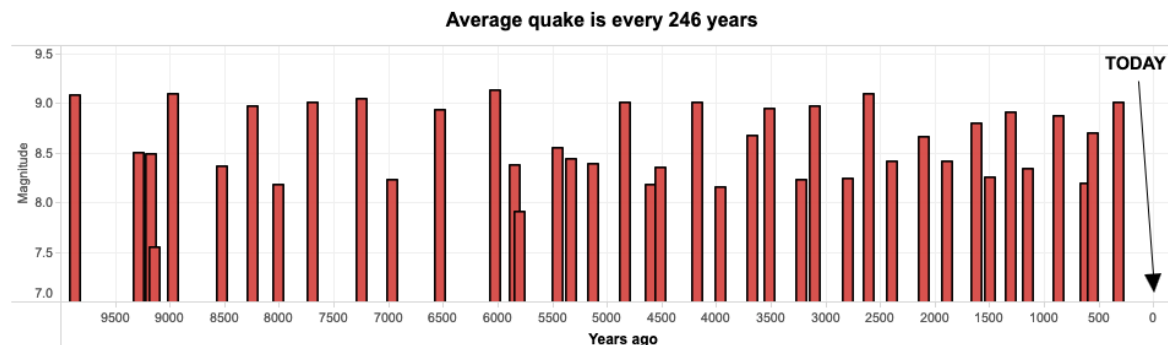
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Looking at the 10,000-year Cascadia history and seeing what it means, starting with the last such event in 1700. The average event repeat interval is 246 years. This means the risk was 50/50 in 1946 – and higher today.

It is easy enough to check off all the historical repeat intervals that have already been exceeded by the quiet time since 1700. The total number of those exceeded in 2018 is 83%. This is not statistical math. It is middle school math.

10,000 years of Cascadia earthquakes

The chart shows all 40 major earthquakes in the Cascadia Subduction Zone that geologists estimate have occurred since 9845 B.C. Scientists estimated the magnitude and timing of each quake by examining soil samples at more than 50 undersea sites between Washington, Oregon and California.



<https://projects.oregonlive.com/maps/earthquakes/timeline>

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Our testimony to the House Emergency Management Committee supporting many of their infrastructure bills has not been acknowledged or acted on. Example:

<https://olis.oregonlegislature.gov/liz/2025R1/Downloads/PublicTestimonyDocument/134265>

We believe HB 2749 is an example of another emergency bill that is on a death march to W&M (no possibility of federal funding). It does not generate revenue.

The Committee must please advocate for Oregon to self-invest in tragically neglected infrastructure that leaves the public at obvious risk. It's time our Oregon AG to sue BNSF for a second secure bridge, because BNSF like all industry lobbyists assumes that Federal governance is their insurer of last resort, after their avoidable accidents become history. The current Executive Branch terminated that expectation with EO 14154. It's now over for them, in case they missed it.

Respectfully, Tracy Farwell, HD-46, Sustainability Desk, Better Energy LLC