



Funding Request: \$1 Million

McCord Creek Bridge Power Line Relocation Project

May 9, 2025

Dear Co-Chairs and Committee Members:

I am providing this testimony in support of the City of Cascade Locks (the “City”) request for capital construction funding in the amount of \$1 million to reimburse the cost associated with an Oregon Department of Transportation (“ODOT” or the “Department”) ordered utility line relocation project adjacent to Interstate 84 at milepost 37 in the Columbia River Gorge.

In the fall of 2007, the City undergrounded 1.6 miles of lines near McCord Creek, about 6 miles west of the City, in an effort to reduce annual maintenance costs and wildfire risk. The City coordinated all this work to relocate the electric directly with ODOT staff. In 2022, the Department directed the city to relocate these exact same lines to accommodate a bridge replacement and realignment over interstate 84 at McCord Creek at a bidded cost of \$1.05 million. These lines are operated by the City's municipally owned utility, and therefore its citizens are ultimately responsible for all these costs.

The utility only has 1004 customers so the cost per customer in this project is \$1814 (based on loan principle and interest). These costs per customer would be several thousand more if it was absorbed solely by the customers who are served by the affected facilities west of this capital project. In fact, this portion of the electrical distribution system runs at a substantial operating loss. In addition to these and other impacts, the loan payment to ODOT is diverting precious resources from other important capital priorities that are needed to maintain reliability for residents.

Bottomline, this is an undue burden on a small community that ODOT forced on the City. The road move and related bridge replacement benefits the state as a whole, Oregon residents from afar traveling on the highway, and in large part interstate travelers and commerce. This project should not be funded by a small City of fewer than 1400 residents. It should be funded by the state and/or with federal highway funds, which amounted to approximately \$850 billion in 2024.

Lastly, this stretch of I-84 is highly fire prone and subject to extreme weather and weather events. As a consequence, road work is frequent and costly. This is not the first road work that ODOT has conducted in the area and will not be the last. Additional projects of this magnitude or greater could severely harm the City – this a bad precedent and unsustainable policy.

For these reasons, the City humbly requests that the legislature grant our capital construction funding request.

Sincerely,

Council Member Bernard Seeger
City of Cascade Locks