

Submitter:

Emily Clark Cuellar

On Behalf Of:

Committee:

Joint Committee On Transportation Reinvestment

Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB2025

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on the critical need to strengthen North Portland's infrastructure in preparation for a major earthquake. Scientists estimate a 37% chance of a magnitude 7–9+ earthquake striking the Pacific Northwest in the next 50 years. When—not if—this occurs, it is expected to devastate much of the Portland Metro area and especially the Critical Energy Infrastructure (CEI) Hub, which stores over 90% of Oregon's fuel across from St. Johns.

This presents an extreme public safety risk, particularly for the North Portland peninsula. Three sides of the peninsula are highly prone to soil liquefaction, which will destabilize the land during a quake. The only evacuation routes—Lombard, Fessenden, and Columbia Blvd—all cross over century-old bridges spanning a deep rail cut. These bridges are expected to fail in a major seismic event. Columbia and Lombard are currently designated as regional emergency transportation routes, yet the condition of the infrastructure means we cannot rely on them to function in an emergency. A Portland Bureau of Transportation (PBOT) study has confirmed the urgent need to strengthen these bridges and key access routes. Without this investment, North Portland risks becoming completely isolated following an earthquake.

Fires or ruptures at the CEI Hub could create highly toxic air, requiring immediate evacuation. But even in the absence of fire, residents could be cut off from medical care, food, and essential supplies for weeks. This issue is life or death for families like mine and my neighbors living on the peninsula.

This is not just a neighborhood issue—it is a regional and statewide concern. The time to act is now. I urge the committee to prioritize funding for seismic upgrades to the North Portland bridge crossings and surrounding emergency access infrastructure. The safety and resilience of our community depends on it.

Thank you for your time and consideration