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MEASURE: HB 2179
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SUBMITTED BY: Commissioner
Deborah Kafoury

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TO: Committee on Senate Finance and Revenue
FR: Commissioner Deborah Kafoury
RE: HB 2179

Good afternoon, Chair Burdick and Members of the Committee, I am Multnomah County Commissioner Deborah Kafoury. I appreciate the opportunity to testify in support of HB 2179.

This bill is a technical fix from HB 2001, the Oregon Jobs and Transportation Act passed in 2009. As you may recall, HB 2001 gave permission to Multnomah County and Clackamas County to enact a local vehicle registration fee for the purpose of "design, replacement, engineering and construction" of the Sellwood Bridge.

The problem, and the reason we are here today with HB 2179, is that the original language did not specify that the revenue collected from a vehicle registration fee could be used to pay debt service and costs related to bonds.

Although we felt the legislative intent was very clear about the purpose of the local vehicle registration fee, our bond counsel has advised us that "in order to give an unqualified opinion to investors that a pledge of these fees is a valid and binding obligation of the county, a statutory change is necessary.

HB 2179 simply clarifies this point by adding the language "may be used to pay debt service and costs related to bonds or other obligations issued for such purposes."

We are here with some urgency because we need to move forward with the financing on this project. Our timeline calls for beginning construction next year.

I think it bears repeating that the Sellwood Bridge, after 85 years, is functionally and structurally obsolete and has a federal bridge sufficiency rating of 2 out of 100. Currently trucks and buses are prohibited from using the bridge because of weight restrictions. At the same time, this bridge is the busiest 2-lane bridge in Oregon, carrying over 30,000 vehicles daily.

Replacing this bridge will improve connections, operations and safety for vehicles, bicycles and pedestrians. This project will create approximately 4,000 jobs for Oregonians.

I am happy to answer any questions. Thank you.

Transportation White Paper Sellwood Bridge Replacement

Background

The Sellwood Bridge is a regionally significant transportation facility. It links two state highways and is the only Willamette River crossing in a 12-mile reach. The bridge provides a critical segment for inter-county trips between Multnomah, Clackamas and Washington counties. It is the busiest 2-lane bridge in Oregon, carrying over 30,000 vehicles daily.

After 85 years, the existing bridge has reached the end of its useful service life. It is functionally and structurally obsolete (rating 2 out of 100 on a bridge sufficiency index). The narrow two-lane bridge has a single narrow, substandard sidewalk and no bike lanes. Congestion and slow travel speeds caused by high travel demand occur on the bridge and approaches for several hours each day. The bridge is part of the regional freight and transit system. However, trucks and buses have been prohibited from using the bridge since 2004, diverting approximately 100 buses and 1,200 trucks to other routes each day.

Project

Replacing the Sellwood Bridge will improve connections, operations and safety for vehicles, bicycles and pedestrians.

The project will remove deficiencies of the existing bridge, reduce congestion at each bridge head, and enhance safety by reducing the risk of head-on collisions on the bridge. Bicycle and pedestrian facilities will replace the one narrow sidewalk, bring the bridge into compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), and improve connections to regional trails on each side of the bridge. Trucks, buses and emergency response vehicles weighing more than 10 tons will be able to again use the bridge, with improved safety. Economic and congestion mitigation benefits will come from removing the existing tight turning radii and weight restrictions that force trucks to travel out-of-direction. The existing vulnerability of the bridge to earthquakes and landslides will be corrected by a new bridge.

Environmental benefits will also result from a new structure. The existing structure discharges roadway stormwater runoff directly into the Willamette River, home to several federally-listed fish species. State-of-the-art stormwater treatment facilities will capture and treat run-off before it is released to the river. Removing the current structure will also eliminate lead based paint from falling into the river. The project will create approximately 4,000 jobs.

Status

The Sellwood Bridge project has a preferred alternative approved by a federal Record of Decision. A deck arch bridge type has been selected and in-water construction is anticipated in the summer of 2012.

Funding Plan

Multnomah County with the State of Oregon, City of Portland, Clackamas County and the federal government have a funding plan that finances all but \$20 million of the \$290 million project. The final increment of the funding plan is needed through federal assistance via the authorization bill, multiple appropriations bills, and/or competitive grant solicitation such as the recent TIGER program.

Contributions from each entity are as follows:

Multnomah County	\$127 million
City of Portland	\$80 million
Clackamas County	\$22 million
State of Oregon	\$30 million
<u>Previously secured federal funds</u>	<u>\$11 million</u>
Remaining gap	\$20 million