



AMERICAN COUNCIL OF ENGINEERING COMPANIES OF OREGON

*“The Engineers”*

Testimony in Support of  
HB 2800  
to the  
Joint Committee on the Interstate-5 Bridge Replacement Project  
February 11, 2013

Good afternoon co-chairs and members of the committee, my name is Erik Peterson, owner of Peterson Structural Engineers, Inc., a Portland based, family owned, 10 person structural engineering firm. I am also the President of the American Council of Engineering Companies (ACEC) Oregon. ACEC Oregon represents more than 110 member firms and more than 3,500 engineers in Oregon. ACEC is pleased to offer our support for HB 2800 and to continue our active advocacy for investment in Oregon's critical infrastructure. We have no doubt that this is a needed and timely investment to ensure the entire I-5 system can continue to operate efficiently and safely for freight, commuters, visitors and locals who use this corridor. The long-term benefits are huge, but the short term design and construction jobs along with products and materials to be purchased locally will help Oregon recover from the interminable economic malaise we find ourselves in.

In December 2007, flooding just 60 miles north of Portland on Interstate-5 shut the major north south freight corridor to vehicle traffic for many days, costing the economies of both Oregon and Washington hundreds of millions of dollars. As a structural engineer, I know the realities of the very real risk for a major 9.0+ subduction zone earthquake and the catastrophic effect it would have on the current I-5 bridge over the Columbia River. A major seismic event could render the bridge unusable and impact our economy negatively for many years costing billions in economic activity. The seismic risks are real and the economic risks are massive. The current bridge has served us well but it is time to replace it with a more structurally sound span that will be better prepared when the big one hits.

From an economic standpoint, investing in this project will provide a huge economic stimulus to Oregon, providing a significant return on the state's investment from the considerable federal dollars that will help to build the bridge. Oregon laborers, fabricators, suppliers, companies of all kinds and yes, design professionals from all over the state will benefit from the funds this project will generate. At this time my firm does not have a contract directly associated with the Interstate-5 bridge replacement project. However, my company, just like many other businesses, will benefit by the laborers and professionals who are gainfully employed by this project and decide to invest in remodeling their homes, purchasing new merchandise, shopping at local stores and spending the money they earn in the local economy. My firm may never see dollar one directly from this project but I assure you we will obtain more projects and employ more Oregon based engineers to perform the work that will come from this investment.

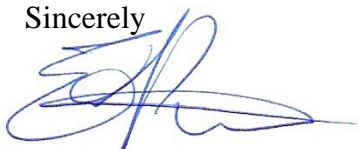
Oregon citizens who gain employment from the investment created by HB 2800 will pay state and local taxes on the monies they earn, providing an increased tax base to fund schools, maintain and improve infrastructure, keep libraries open and add to the quality of life we all seek for ourselves, our families and our communities. The benefits of a healthier regional economy will accrue to every Oregonian in all parts of the state.

While many other positive reasons to promote this project exist, I make the final point that there is no better time than now to push forward and fund this project. Federal dollars are available now that may not be available in the future. Envision the wreckage of the existing bridge lying in the Columbia River and the costs presented to the State for the proposed project will seem small in comparison to the costs the loss of this most important structure will leverage on the citizens of our State.

I thank legislative leadership, Governor Kitzhaber and this committee for the political courage to take the lead on this issue. Please consider me and ACEC Oregon a resource for any further information you may need in regards to this legislation.

I thank you very much for your time and consideration.

Sincerely



Erik Peterson, P.E.