

GREG WALDEN
SECOND DISTRICT, OREGON

ENERGY AND COMMERCE

SUBCOMMITTEES:
COMMUNICATIONS AND TECHNOLOGY
CHAIRMAN

E-MAIL VIA WEBSITE:
<http://walden.house.gov>



Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

January 13, 2016

WASHINGTON, DC OFFICE:
2185 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515-3702
TELEPHONE: (202) 225-6730

DISTRICT OFFICES:
14 N CENTRAL AVENUE, SUITE 112
MEDFORD, OR 97501
TELEPHONE: (541) 776-4646
TOLL FREE: (800) 533-3303

1051 NW BOND STREET, SUITE 400
BEND, OR 97701
TELEPHONE: (541) 389-4408

1211 WASHINGTON AVENUE
LA GRANDE, OR 97850
TELEPHONE: (541) 624-2400

Chair Lee Beyer
Senate Interim Committee on Business and Transportation
900 Court St. NE
Salem, OR 97301

Dear Chair Beyer and Members of the Senate Business and Transportation Committee:

I write in strong support of efforts to extend the highway designation of Oregon Route 35 (OR-35) across the Columbia River from the City of Hood River to help clarify the eligibility of future projects that would improve or replace the Hood River Bridge. Extending this designation will help these projects' eligibility for important federal funding opportunities under the Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act recently passed by the U.S. Congress.

The FAST Act included language I supported to bolster grant funding eligibility for projects within National Scenic Areas (NSA's). Specifically, this law outlines the eligibility of projects within NSA's on the National Highway System for funding under the Nationally Significant Freight and Highway Projects Program which supports important highway infrastructure projects. Extending the OR-35 highway designation across the Columbia River will help attain recognition on the National Highway System, further clarifying the eligibility of future bridge projects for federal grant funding opportunities under this law.

As you know, major transportation elements within the Scenic Area, such as the Hood River Bridge, are in major need of upgrading or replacing. Currently, the Hood River Bridge facilitates commerce and travel between OR-35 and Highway 14 in Washington, allowing the passage of 3.6 million vehicles and \$75 million in goods each year. However, low load carrying capacity, insufficient channel span across the river, design vulnerabilities for seismic events, and other deficiencies prohibit the bridge from adequately serving the needs of the local economy.

Given the integral role the Hood River Bridge plays in supporting the local economy and travel of residents and visitors to the Columbia River Gorge, I fully support these efforts to help facilitate recognition of the bridge on the National Highway System and further clarify its eligibility for federal grant funding under the FAST Act.

Best regards,

Greg Walden
Member of Congress