

April 5, 2019

Representative Brad Witt, Chair  
House Committee on Natural Resources  
900 Court St., NE  
Salem, OR 97301

Re: Support for Bridge of the Gods Multi-Use Access Project

Chair Witt and Members of the Committee:

I am writing to express Travel Oregon's support for the Port of Cascade Locks' Bridge of the Gods bicycle, pedestrian and equestrian project. As the agency responsible for strengthening the state's tourism industry, Travel Oregon is strongly supportive of projects that will allow increased multi-modal access to Oregon's outdoor recreation resources, including the Pacific Crest Trail. It's no surprise that outdoor recreation in Oregon has been a key component in driving the economic impact of our state's \$11.8 billion tourism industry that employs more than 112,000 Oregonians.

A recent study by the Outdoor Industry Association found that the state's outdoor recreation industry (including manufacturing and retail sales) generates \$16.4 billion in consumer spending annually, employs 172,000 Oregonians and generates \$749 million in state and local tax revenue. For cities in the Gorge, including Cascade Locks, outdoor recreation powers a large economic engine for local communities. Cascade Locks' economy was heavily impacted by the 2017 Eagle Creek wildfire and this project would increase access and attract a larger user group to the community. It would also increase safety for pedestrians, equestrians and cyclists. Current conditions force these vulnerable user groups to travel alongside vehicles on narrow travel lanes. This project would separate the uses and improve safety conditions for everyone.

And there's more. As Oregonians, we know how fortunate we are to live in one of the most naturally stunning places on earth. Our outdoors ranks among one of the top aspects Oregonians value about living in the state. In 2014, more than 90 percent of residents reported participating in some form of outdoor recreation each year. It is crucial we provide access to our natural treasures for our visitors and residents. The Bridge of the Gods project would increase access for many outdoor recreation user groups, providing access to the Cascade Locks CLIMB mountain bike system, USFS trails including Herman Creek and the Pacific Crest Trail, the Historic Columbia River Highway State Trail, and connecting both Oregon and Washington through the Gorge to Towns to Trails network. It provides access to Cascade Locks' downtown core and supports local businesses like the Brigham Fish Market and Cascade Locks Ale House.

Oregon's access to outdoor recreation resources are some of its greatest assets, and there is a shared benefit and responsibility in providing access to these public lands. We support the Bridge of the Gods project to increase access to these outdoor resources, including the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area, which will give our guests and residents access to the awe-inspiring sights of our natural lands for generations to come.

Sincerely,



Todd Davidson  
CEO, Travel Oregon