

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20510

February 26, 2018

Secretary of Transportation
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Ave, SE
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Secretary Chao,

We write to express our support for the Port of Cascade Locks' application to the Department of Transportation's Federal Land Access Program to fund a bicycle and pedestrian crossing on the Bridge of the Gods. The Port of Cascade Locks is proposing the crossing in partnership with the City of Stevenson, the Pacific Crest Trail Association, Friends of the Gorge, and other local partners to provide safe access to the surrounding communities, the Pacific Crest Trail, and other nearby public lands. We believe this project will further the FLAP goal of improving transportation facilities that provide access to Federal lands.

The Bridge of the Gods is a two-lane bridge that spans the Columbia River in the heart of the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area between the City of Cascade Locks, Oregon and Stevenson, Washington. The bridge is vital to the regional economies on both sides of the river, allowing the passage of over \$35 million in goods per year. During the summer peak season for hiking, biking and sightseeing, the bridges sees over 10,000 vehicle crossings per day.

Currently, non-motorized traffic seeking to cross the bridge must risk sharing lanes for a third of a mile with the heavy traffic. There are no shoulders or dedicated bicycle and pedestrian lanes available. During hiking season, it is common to see heavily laden hikers dodging traffic as they make their way across the bridge, forcing vehicles to avoid them by hugging the centerline. This is a safety concern for all users, especially large trucks and emergency service vehicles.

Recreation tourism is a vital economic driver for the economies of Cascade Locks and Stevenson. Visitors come to experience the remarkable scenic beauty and numerous attractions in the area, including the Bonneville Dam, the Lewis and Clark Trail, the Ice Age Floods Trail, and the Historic Columbia River Highway. Moreover, the iconic Pacific Crest Trail crosses the Columbia River on the Bridge of the Gods, drawing thousands of hikers a year. A multitude of other hiking and biking trails on nearby federal lands draw many additional visitors. These visitors use the bridge to get to and from their destination and to find supplies, meals, and accommodations.

The Port of Cascade Locks' application would fund the design, permitting, planning, and engineering of a bicycle and pedestrian lane cantilevered off the side of the bridge. Once the lane is completed, non-motorized users will be able to cross the bridge safely and separately from other traffic. The crossing would also provide a platform for visitors to observe the breathtaking scenery of the Columbia River Gorge from high above the Columbia River. We

expect the crossing will become an attraction in and of itself, drawing even more visitors to the area to support local businesses. In the wake of the devastating Eagle Creek Fire of 2017, the new attraction would be a welcome boost for a Gorge economy that has been struggling to recover from the loss of its peak season.

We request that you give full and fair consideration to the Port of Cascade Locks' Federal Land Access Program grant application.

Sincerely,



Ron Wyden
United States Senator



Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator



Earl Blumenauer
Member of Congress



Greg Walden
Member of Congress



Jaime Herrera Beutler
Member of Congress