



**INDUSTRIAL/COMMERCIAL FACILITIES • AIRPORT • INTERSTATE BRIDGE • MARINA**

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February 14, 2020

Senator Fred Girod  
Representative Paul Holvey  
Co-Chairs, Joint Ways and Means Capital Construction Subcommittee

Re: HB 5202 - Funding for Ken Jernstedt Aviation Technology and Emergency Response Center, Hood River

Chair Girod, Chair Holvey, and Members of the Committee:

The Port of Hood River (Port) owns and operates the Ken Jernstedt Airfield. In 2016, the Port was awarded an ODOT Connect VI (COVI) grant to:

1. Enhance emergency support capabilities by installing a jet fuel farm usable by helicopters engaging in search and rescue and responding to wildfire, train derailments and other emergencies.
2. Support local UAV companies by providing shovel-ready ground for hangars.
3. Leverage private investment dollars, improving the airport for current and future demand.

Utilities, shovel ready pads for aviation tech buildings, expanded ramp paving and aircraft parking for large helicopters as well as a modernized fuel farm help accomplish this support. This project meshes seamlessly with an FAA Airport Improvement Project that will rehabilitate the Airport's North Ramp at a cost of \$1,800,000. The two projects have been coordinated to leverage the contributions of both funding partners and produce long-term economic benefits. The Port of Hood River has included a version of this project in their Master Plan since the 1970s and is grateful for this opportunity to complete it this year.

Prior to applying for the COVI grant, the Port had a written commitment from the FAA for a Categorical Exclusion for fill of a minor wetland. However, after receiving the COVI grant award, the FAA changed direction and required an Environmental Assessment and an in-depth Federal and State wetland permitting process, stalling construction for 2.5 years and increasing construction costs significantly. Due to these delays and added costs, the project now exceeds the Port's ability to pay for it without additional funds.

Based on the cost estimates of project engineers, the Port's original legislative funding ask was \$574,272. However, project bids came in on February 13<sup>th</sup> and we are pleased to report that **the new requested amount is \$175,566 in one-time funds**. This amount is beyond the financial capacity of the Port to provide as we are already supplying 37% of the grant match, a significant burden for a small local agency.

The project can now move forward due to this decrease in cost, but without the legislature's help, the vital fueling component cannot. In light of the recent Eagle Creek fire and growing intensity of Oregon's wildfire seasons, as well as the frequent search and rescue efforts undertaken in the gorge area each year, the capacity to support large, jet-fueled helicopters at the Hood River Airport is increasingly important. Please consider providing the additional \$175,566 that will allow us to complete this vital component of the project.

# Port of Hood River

*Providing for the region's economic future.*

Thank you,

Michael McElwee  
Executive Director  
Port of Hood River