

July 11, 2022



Senator Lee Beyer
Representative Susan McLain
Joint Committee on the Interstate 5 Bridge
VIA EMAIL: JI5B.exhibits@oregonlegislature.gov

Dear Co-Chairs Beyer and McLain and Members of the Committee:

Duckwall Fruit, our 103-year-old family business operating in Hood River, Oregon, supports a multi-modal I-5 bridge that will move people and goods safely and efficiently. We must replace the bridge now to address the vulnerability of the two structures to seismic activity. The new bridge also must move people and goods efficiently even as our region continues to grow.

We appreciate the effort undertaken to replace the bridge. The inclusion of light rail and safe routes for pedestrians and cyclists will help move greater numbers of people over the bridge more efficiently. Yet, we remain concerned that other needs have not been adequately addressed. These include the need for additional capacity to serve commuters and businesses that rely on the timely delivery of raw materials for use in manufacturing and the movement of finished products to markets.

With Portland and Seattle serving as our transportation hubs, virtually 100% of our transportation system must cross this congestion filled bridge, empty or full, to get to Hood River to load over 114,000,000,000 pounds of our fresh packed pears annually. Duckwall Fruit only packs approximately 30% of the region's pear tonnage, so the overall amount is much greater! Our highly perishable product simply cannot wait.

The transportation infrastructure needs of our region in 2022 are dramatically different than in 1917 when the older, northbound span opened or even in 1960 when the "new" southbound span was completed. Even with the addition of multi-modal options, we worry that the overall future capacity needs of the bridge have not been met. Our region continues to grow, and employers are recalibrating their workforce to be highly mobile. In addition, the single auxiliary lane under consideration will not serve freight needs adequately. The Interstate Bridge Replacement Program estimates that the addition of a single auxiliary lane will improve travel times by a mere handful of minutes. It does not serve our region to add a fraction of the capacity needed to improve the seven to 10 hours a day of congestion that currently persists.

The modified locally preferred alternative may satisfy the vocal few who would prefer no expansion of vehicle capacity – or no new bridge at all. However, our transportation system is integrally connected to our economy, and the new bridge must better convey the more than \$70 million in freight it carries every day.

We support the replacement of the bridge but remain concerned that it lacks adequate vehicle capacity and urge you to consider an option that provides for two auxiliary lanes in each direction.

Thank you for your consideration,

Ed Weathers
President, Duckwall Fruit