

July 20, 2022

To: Co-Chair Senator Lee Beyer
Co-Chair Representative Susan McLain
Senator Brian Boquist
Senator Lynn Findley
Senator Lew Frederick
Representative Shelly Boshart Davis
Representative Khanh Pham
Representative Greg Smith

CC: Governor Kate Brown
Senate President Peter Courtney
House Speaker Dan Rayfield

Workers Support the Interstate Bridge Replacement Program

The undersigned labor organizations support the continued progress towards replacement of the Interstate Bridge between Oregon and Washington. Together we represent thousands of workers throughout the region who have an interest in the construction, transit and transportation issues that rely on a successful and timely planning process. We know that any undertaking of this scale and significance requires a robust and complicated process, and appreciate the many hours that community leaders, staff and elected officials have put into reaching this point.

The most critical aspects of this project are:

The long-term resilience and safety concerns with the bridge itself. Remember that the I-5 bridge is in desperate need of replacement due to age, outdated technology and seismic resiliency. As noted in “The Case for the IBR,¹

- The Interstate Bridge is built on wood piles in sandy soil, making them vulnerable to failure in the event of an earthquake and it is not practically feasible to retrofit them to current seismic standards.
- The program area experiences crash rates over 3 times higher than statewide averages for comparable facilities.
- Closely spaced interchanges, narrow lanes, limited sight distance, lack of safety shoulders and bridge lifts that occur up to 350 times a year on average all contribute to an increase in vehicle crashes that result in injuries, fatalities, vehicles and infrastructure damage and increased traffic congestion.
- The shared use paths on the bridges do not provide adequate safety or space for travelers who walk, bike, or roll, and are not compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act.”

¹ [The Case for IBR | I-5 Bridge Replacement Program \(interstatebridge.org\)](https://interstatebridge.org/)

Increased transit options to get folks, goods, and services where they need to go. The current bridge is not only a major bottleneck in our transportation systems, it also fails to connect transit options across the region. This alternative would increase options and address many congestion issues. Improving multi-model transportation and transit options will also help our region meet climate resiliency goals.

Equity and economic opportunity should be front and center. Our organizations appreciate the ongoing commitment to ensure that the project will focus on a promise to provide equitable input, outcomes and opportunities. Construction careers will be launched and promoted on a project of this significance and the economic impacts should be shared by all communities, with a promise to increase representation of women and people of color in the workforce. This can be accomplished through a commitment to a strong community workforce agreement. A project of this significance will also have a long term positive impact on the industries for whom the bridge provides a needed connection for goods, operators and freight moving along the West Coast..

We support the continued efforts of partner agencies, project teams and community leaders who have weighed in on this project. Our organizations are ready to continue to engage with partners to move this process forward. We hope that the team will continue to move ahead to the next step and keep this on schedule. This is a once in a generation opportunity to align federal funding with support from Oregon and Washington states. Our organizations look forward to being part of this continued dialogue now and in the future.

