

March 2, 2021

Senator Lee Beyer (co-chair)  
Representative David Gomberg (co-chair)  
Joint Ways and Means Subcommittee on Transportation and Economic Development

RE: HB 5023 Regional Infrastructure Fund

Dear Co-chairs Beyer and Gomberg,

I write in support of the Oregon Business Development Department (Business Oregon) budget request; in particular, the \$40M for the Regional Infrastructure fund. The Regional Infrastructure Fund has been a crucial tool to assist communities. Moving forward this funding source will be even more essential as we begin to recover from the economic toll that COVID-19 and unprecedented wildfires have taken on our small businesses over the past year.

The Regional Infrastructure Fund has been a valuable resource for the Regional Solutions program. The vision for Regional Solutions is to align state resources with other public, private, philanthropic and higher education resources to complete projects that support locally identified economic and community development priorities. The Regional Solutions Advisory Committee has served as an important venue for creating consensus among regional public, private, philanthropic, higher education and arts leaders about the priorities in Central Oregon. The committee has also supported multi-party investments in projects that address the priorities.

The Regional Infrastructure Fund is a critical source of funding to support rural priority projects. Past investments have been leveraged to support the entrepreneurial ecosystem in Central Oregon. A couple noteworthy examples include funding the build out of the OSU Cascades Innovation co-lab and funding the re-location of the Warm Springs commissary to serve as a small business incubator.

During 2020, Oregonians were affected both by the global COVID-19 pandemic and unprecedented Labor Day wildfires. In Central Oregon, Governor Brown deployed the Regional Solutions program to focus on COVID response and recovery.

While Oregon has been successful in minimizing the health impacts from COVID, we all know that the economy has taken a substantial hit. Central Oregon is no exception; the region has suffered significant job losses as a result of the pandemic. The Regional Solutions Advisory Committee stands ready to focus on recovery and ensure that we build a more resilient and equitable future for all. I recognize that there are always competing priorities for state funding. The Regional Infrastructure Fund is the best way to respond to the needs of individual communities all around the state and ensure that we are investing state resources on recovery in the most efficient and valuable way possible.

Thank you for supporting investments in the unique needs of each region in the state.

Best,

Michael P. Hollern,  
Chairman of Board, Brooks Resources  
Convener, Central Oregon Regional Solutions Advisory Committee