

May 7, 2021

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

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

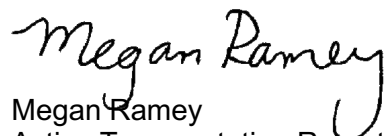
I am writing to support the Port of Hood River's lottery bonding request to the Oregon Legislature for \$5 million to help fund Phase 2 of the Hood River/White Salmon Interstate Bridge replacement project. The current toll bridge is a critical link for our regional bi-state economy, but it is also functionally obsolete, weight-restricted and seismically deficient. If construction of the replacement bridge is not underway by 2026, the existing bridge will need \$50 million in repairs and rehabilitation over the next 15 years in order to remain safe and operational. Phase 2 of the bridge replacement needs to begin in 2021 in order to keep the project on schedule.

As an active transportation champion and bike tourism professional, this bridge replacement is an giant opportunity for the following reasons:

1. To provide a walking and rolling connection for residents to access jobs by foot, mobility device or bicycle between our 2 communities.
2. To provide more workforce housing for residents who want to walk or roll to work. Currently, Hood River is the only option for walkable housing and the real estate prices are skyrocketing. Bingen and White Salmon would be great options, but the bridge is the barrier.
3. With the explosion of the electric bike as car replacement, the bridge replacement needs to plan for large numbers of commuters by ebike versus cars.
4. To make the Gorge more resilient to climate change, extreme events like fire or earthquake and to the cost of owning an automobile. The bridge would better prepare our residents for emergency evacuation and by enabling a lifestyle that mitigates the impacts of climate change.
5. To connect multimodal travelers between Hood River's Greyhound bus and Bingen's Amtrak station, as well as regional transit like Columbia Area Transit and Mount Adams Transit.
6. Lastly, to capitalize on walking and biking tourism, the bridge provides that vital connection across the river.

I am strongly supportive of the Port of Hood River's efforts to secure \$5 million from Oregon this session. This funding would match a \$5 million federal BUILD grant, \$5 million from Washington state (confirmed), and \$1.25 million from the Port to fund the \$16.25 million total cost of Phase 2 of this vital project.

Thank you for your consideration.



Megan Ramey
Active Transportation Rep-at large, ODOT Region 1 Area Commission on Transportation
Planning Commissioner for City of Hood River
Founder, Bikabout.com, a travel site inspiring bike tourism