



January 3, 2023

To Members of the Oregon Legislature and Washington Legislatures,

This letter is to indicate support by the Friends of the Columbia Gorge for the Port of Cascade Locks seismic strengthening project on the Bridge of the Gods. The Bridge is a vitally important link for our bi-state region. Since 1926 the Bridge has provided reliable and safe passage for passenger and commercial traffic and has played a key role in helping the Columbia Gorge region develop a strong economy. The Bridge of the Gods is an iconic landmark, sitting at the crossroads of commerce, recreation and history. The only river crossing for 50 miles between Portland and Hood River, it is critical to commercial and recreational vehicular traffic, as well as non-motorized travelers within the recreation-rich Columbia Gorge National Scenic Area.

The Port's project calls for investing 12 million dollars to perform detailed structural analysis of the Bridge focused on improving its resiliency in the event of a major seismic event. This investment will also make it possible to perform some site work to make needed improvements as identified by the analysis, as well as prepare for needed strengthening of the Bridge structure, in preparation for adding a safe passageway for pedestrians and bicyclists to cross over the Columbia River. This project supports Friends of the Columbia Gorge's vision for a destination trekking network encircling the Columbia Gorge, connecting communities, rural areas, and wilderness trails, called *Gorge Towns to Trails*.

Friends of the Columbia Gorge believes that the Port's plan is timely and necessary. We encourage the legislatures of Oregon and Washington to each allocate 6 million dollars in funding for this project. This important investment for transportation infrastructure will produce an excellent return on investment for both states.

Friends of the Columbia Gorge is a 501(c)(3) organization founded in 1980 to push for federal protection of the Columbia River Gorge. In 1986, Friends helped secure the passage of the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area Act to create comprehensive Gorge protection consistent across six counties and two states.

Sincerely,

*Kevin Gorman*

Kevin Gorman, Executive Director