

Submitter: Erich Brill
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Joint Committee On Transportation
Measure: HB3622

Chairs Frederick and McLain, Vice-Chairs Boquist and Boshart-Davis, Members of the Joint Transportation Committee:

We write today to express our support for HB 3622, which would provide important financial support for Multnomah County's Earthquake Ready Burnside Bridge project and other important local bridges in our state. Our aging infrastructure is struggling to keep pace with the transportation needs of our growing community today, and are unequipped to support our community after the major earthquake, which could hit at any time. Our bridges are interconnected and play an integral role in ensuring a reliable and efficient statewide transportation system. Funding our local bridges now, especially those along Emergency Transportation Routes, is critical to the resiliency and sustainability of our growing and working community.

If funded, this project will play a critical role in community safety, response, and economic recovery after a major earthquake, provide numerous jobs in the Portland Metro Region, and move this region closer to its safety and multi-modal transportation goals.

Oregon's largest metro region and statewide economic driver currently does not have a downtown bridge that will be usable immediately after a major earthquake. The Pacific Northwest regularly experiences some of the largest earthquakes in the world along the Cascadia Subduction Zone (CSZ). Geologists estimate there is a one in three chance that a CSZ earthquake with a magnitude of 8+ will strike the Portland region in the next 50 years. Completion of Multnomah County's Earthquake Ready Burnside Bridge project will ensure that we have at least one downtown bridge that emergency responders can use after a major earthquake. Making the Burnside Bridge seismically resilient will improve the reliability of the nearly 19-mile Burnside St. regional Emergency Transportation Route, which stretches from Washington County to Gresham across the heart of the metro region, and plays an instrumental role in the overall transportation system.

Along with future benefits following a natural disaster, the Earthquake Ready Burnside Bridge project would improve mobility options by including safer and enhanced pedestrian, ADA and bicycle facilities and the opportunity to build a new streetcar line.

This project is also expected to promote short and long-term job creation as the project is expected to generate over 6,000 job-years of employment in the State of

Oregon. Many of those employees could be apprentices getting valuable on the job training, including many women and people of color. In the long-term, this could help the Metro region have a more diverse pool of candidates to hire on future transportation infrastructure projects and support both Multnomah County and the Metro Regional Government's goals in diversity, equity, and inclusion.

We urge your support of HB 3622, which supports the replacement of the current 97-year-old Burnside Bridge that has reached the end of its service life. This project will help protect the region and the state from the full impacts of a major disaster, foster its ability to recover after the earthquake and ensure that the region has a reliable and future-ready multi-modal bridge for the next century.

Sincerely,

Erich Brill
Director of Administration and Facilities
Mercy Corps