

Submitter: Edward Wortman
On Behalf Of: Oregonians west of Willamette River
Committee: Joint Committee On Transportation
Measure: HB3622

Without a new, earthquake-ready Burnside Bridge, 800,000 or more Oregonians could be trapped somewhere west of the Willamette River after the upcoming Cascadian subduction earthquake. This number includes not only Portland's westside residents but also the 600,000 residents of Washington County plus eastside residents who work west of the river. Most or all existing Willamette River bridges, including those in Portland, are likely to collapse during the quake. Everyone west of the river will be stuck pretty much where they happened to be when the quake hit, without water, food, electrical power, heat, medical care or other essentials. Little or no help will be able to reach them except for what might come by helicopter or boat. It could take years before a new bridge is available to carry vehicles back and forth over the river. During this period, the only hope that westside folks may have is that they will be evacuated by air or water and left to start new lives east of the river.

In closing, I want to emphasize that the Earthquake Ready Burnside Bridge project is not just a local Multnomah County project. After the Cascadian quake, having a usable Burnside Bridge will be essential to assure economic recovery of the entire region west of the Willamette. Otherwise, a huge portion of Oregon's economy, including Washington County's high-tech industry, is likely to be crippled and may never recover.