



February 7, 2024

To the Members of the Oregon Legislature;

Mid-Columbia Economic Development District writes today to express support for House Bill 4110 and Senate Bill 1512, which would allocate \$6 million in state funding to the Port of Cascade Locks to fund a seismic resilience and bridge preservation study on the Bridge of the Gods.

The Mid-Columbia Economic Development District (MCEDD) serves five counties in the Columbia River Gorge: Hood River, Wasco, and Sherman in Oregon; and Skamania and Klickitat in Washington. We work to promote our local communities through cohesive regional economic planning and leveraging bi-state cooperation to access resources to solve local problems. Communities on both sides of the Columbia River are inextricably tied together, and we rely on our bridges daily to get to work, daycare, school, or to simply get groceries.

The Bridge of the Gods, connecting Cascade Locks with Skamania County and nearby Stevenson, WA, is one of these critical crossings. As the only bridge between Interstate 205 in the Portland Metro Area and Hood River, this bridge sees around 1.6 million crossings per year. While nearing 100 years old, the bridge has been well maintained by the Port of Cascade Locks and is in good working order.

However, like any aging piece of infrastructure, the bridge is in need of a number of upgrades to keep up with modern demand. The Port's ask of \$6 million would fund the studies necessary to provide a roadmap for future improvements. Seismic resilience, bridge preservation priorities, and the feasibility of a pedestrian/bike walkway would all be explored.

We encourage members of the Oregon Legislature to consider the significant role that the Bridge of the Gods plays in our communities' connectivity and economic vitality and support this request. This \$6 million investment will be a down payment on the bridge's future, to help provide safe, resilient, reliable crossings for generations to come.

Thank you for your consideration and support for this project.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jessica Metta".

Jessica Metta
Executive Director