



Co-Chair Gorsek, Co-Chair McLain, members of the Joint Transportation Committee. For the record my name is Dan Mahr. I handle government affairs for the Port of Cascade Locks. We are here today to testify in support of House Bill 4110 and Senate Bill 1512, which are identical bills that would provide \$6 million in general funds to the Port of Cascade Locks for a set of seismic resilience and bridge preservation studies on the Bridge of the Gods.

Earlier this week I watched video of testimony from almost exactly one year ago where the Port and project supporters were here advocating for the same request in the 2023 session. I saw a lot of you all in that video, listening intently to testimony and want to thank you for your consideration & support then as now.

Knowing you are all familiar with this ask, we will keep our testimony succinct.

In 2023, the Port of Cascade Locks' \$6 million ask was paired requests for the Hood River - White Salmon Bridge and the Burnside Bridge. Those two made it through to funding while the Bridge of the Gods ask fell a little short. So we're back here in this short session to finish this business and the Port thanks Co-Chair Gorsek, Co-Chair McLain, members of the committee, for your willingness to give this ask a committee bill. We would also like to thank Senator Bonham for his sponsorship of Senate Bill 1512, and our local Representative Jeff Helfrich for his support as well.

This \$6 million ask will fund a set of seismic resilience and bridge preservation studies on the Bridge of the Gods. While the bridge is nearing its 100th anniversary, we are fortunate to not be looking at a full replacement. A number of structural advantages have given the bridge a longer usable life. That said, the bridge was built before modern seismic and safety standards, so we want a full seismic study done to examine what upgrades are needed for the bridge to survive a major seismic event. We also want to learn what preservation actions we can take now to extend that usable life and put off a full replacement as long as possible. With me today is bridge engineer David McCurry who can address more specifics on those points.

Finally, the studies would explore the feasibility of adding protecting pedestrian and bike crossing to the bridge. Famously, the Pacific Crest Trail crosses the Bridge of the Gods where hikers compete for space with vehicular traffic. Whether that's a new structure cantilevered off the side of the bridge or some other set of improvements, this concept enjoys broad public support. The Pacific Crest Trail Association has been a key advocate for this effort for many years, and we'll hear from their director of advocacy Mark Larabee in a minute.

I now want to talk about a couple elements that are different from last session. First, the Port of Cascade Locks Commission has four new members and a new president. During the pandemic, like many Gorge towns Cascade Locks saw an influx of new residents now able work remotely.



With that came a new infusion of civic interest reflected both on the Port Commission and the Cascade Locks City Council.

The new Port Commission continues the former commission's commitment to the Bridge of Gods and this project, and we thank previous members for their advocacy in last session and beyond.

Also different is that this session we are not seeking \$6 million from the Washington Legislature. Last session we had a line in their Move Ahead Washington package but that was tabled when the Oregon money fell short. This session it is a different story across the river, as they wrestle with huge cost overruns on a few mega projects around the state.

We plan to return to Olympia in the 2025 long session, and have our champion across the river Rep. Kevin Waters to thank for keeping our project on folks' radar. In the meantime, the Port is working with partners in Washington to explore what a bi-state advisory council would look like. This model worked in recent years as the Port worked on a project to restore the bridge's weight limit to full capacity. Our hope is that by the time the Washington Legislature gavel in in 2025, that council will be functioning and the studies from Oregon's investment will be well underway and we can give Washingtonians a sense of what their investment will fund.

The Port also wants to thank this commission for their support of the Hood River – White Salmon Bridge Replacement project. Your investment was critical in leveraging the \$200 million federal award that was recently announced.

Like others have expressed in written testimony, these Gorge bridges are everyday connections for folks in our communities, who live on one side and work on the other, or rely on them for daycare shuttling, or just getting groceries. Regional disasters put these realities into even sharper focus, like the 2017 Eagle Creek Fire or 2016 oil train derailment and fire in Mosier.

Co-Chair Gorsek, Co-Chair McLain, members of the committee, the Port again thanks you for your attention to our project and your consideration of our funding ask.