

March 31, 2025

Dear Co-Chairs McLain and Gorsek, Vice Chairs Boshart-Davis and Starr, and members of the committee,

On behalf of Thrive Hood River and 1000 Friends of Oregon, we write in strong support of HB 2184, which provides crucial funding for replacing the aging Hood River-White Salmon Bridge. This functionally obsolete structure is essential to our region's economy, workforce, and communities. Replacing it is not only a matter of safety, but key to long-term prosperity and sustainability in the Columbia River Gorge.

The bridge is vital to our agricultural economy. Built in 1924, it is narrow, lacks shoulders, and imposes a 10-foot width limit that restricts farm equipment and freight trucks. Hood River County produces over \$120 million annually in crops—primarily apples and pears—many of which are processed or shipped in Washington. Likewise, Washington produce often comes to Hood River for value-added processing. The bridge's limitations undercut the competitiveness of growers and processors on both sides of the river.

Many Hood River County businesses depend on Washington-based workers who use the bridge daily. High housing costs in Oregon mean that many workers in manufacturing, healthcare, hospitality, and agriculture live in Washington. A 2020 study by the Port of Hood River found about 1,600 daily trips across the bridge by these commuters. Safety concerns, rising tolls, and uncertainty about the bridge's future threaten this essential workforce connection. A new bridge will protect regional economic resilience by ensuring safe, affordable travel.

HB 2184 also includes a lane for bicycles and pedestrians—critical for the nearly 30% of Oregonians who don't drive. The current bridge offers no safe option for non-motorized users, cutting off what should be an easy connection between Hood River and White Salmon. In a region that values recreation and active transportation, this is a serious gap. The new bridge will fix it, advancing climate and public health goals.

HB 2184 is more than a bridge bill—it's an investment in rural development, workforce access, sustainable infrastructure, and regional strength. We urge the Legislature to fund and pass HB 2184.

Thank you for your leadership and attention to this critical priority.

Respectfully,

Lach Litwer
Vice President
Thrive Hood River



Cassie Wilson
Transportation Policy Manager
1000 Friends of Oregon

