



May 4, 2021

Senator Fred Girod, Co-Chair
Representative Paul Holvey, Co-Chair
Subcommittee on Capital Construction
Joint Committee on Ways and Means

Dear Co-Chair Girod, Co-Chair Holvey and Members of the Committee:

Mid-Columbia Economic Development District (MCEDD) strongly supports the Port of Hood River's lottery bonding request to the Oregon Legislature for \$5 million to help fund Phase 2 of the Hood River/White Salmon Interstate Bridge replacement project. The current toll bridge is a critical link for our regional bi-state economy, but it is also functionally obsolete, weight-restricted and seismically deficient. If construction of the replacement bridge is not underway by 2026, the existing bridge will need \$50 million in repairs and rehabilitation over the next 15 years in order to remain safe and operational. Phase 2 of the bridge replacement needs to begin in 2021 to keep the project on schedule.

This project is again the top priority in the regional Columbia Gorge Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy. The ranking indicates the considerable impact this project will have throughout the region as this bridge provides a critical transportation link businesses and communities depend upon for emergency response, worker commute, freight transport, tourism, and access to healthcare and educational services.

This current structure raises concerns over its age, its narrow lanes, no safety shoulders, difficult barge navigation, no bicycle or pedestrian facilities, weight restrictions, and its lack of seismic resiliency which would sever a connection for various communities in an earthquake. A new bridge is necessary to improve the movement of people and goods across the Columbia River in the Columbia Gorge and support livable communities.

MCEDD supports the Port of Hood River's efforts to secure \$5 million from Oregon this session. This funding would match a \$5 million federal BUILD grant, \$5 million from Washington state (confirmed), and \$1.25 million from the Port to fund the \$16.25 million total cost of Phase 2 of this vital project. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

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

Jessica Metta
Executive Director