

May 7, 2021

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

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

I am writing to support 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 in order to keep the project on schedule.

Gorge Networks is a provider of broadband internet access throughout the Gorge. Our crews traverse the bridge multiple times daily. Congestion, delays, and maintenance have posed significant challenges as technicians strive to reach residents and businesses to install and support this essential service. Further, increasing the internet capacity between Washington and Oregon by installing fiber between Hood River and White Salmon, promotes commerce, and increases reliability and capacity to users. The current structure poses significant challenges related to installing fiber connecting these communities.

A new bridge would allow us to operate more efficiently and allow for utilities to be placed in a secure and efficient way.

I am strongly supportive of 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.



Dan Bubb, President
Gorge Networks LLC