

Report on the Joint Transportation Committee of the Oregon Legislature, Monday, April 14, Hearing at which our bill HB 2749 was discussed. This bill would provide monies to Portland to conduct the “30% design” of a new seismically-resilient bridge at Columbia over Columbia Way and the railroad “cut”. Columbia is one of our designated emergency routes, however, currently, since the bridges over the “cut” will fail – during, if not before the earthquake to come [it’s in such bad shape], we have no emergency route and would be cut off from the rest of Portland after the quake. It is critical that we secure an emergency route for medical help and more. And, if the CEI Hub sends toxic smoke this way, we’ll have no escape without one.

You can watch the Hearing here.

<https://olis.oregonlegislature.gov/liz/mediaplayer/?clientID=4879615486&eventID=2025041211>

City Council President Elans Pirtle-Guiney spoke first, virtually, because she was on a tight schedule. Then, the committee suspended the hearing on HB1749 for 10 minutes while they attended to something else. HB2749 reconvened at the 11:40 mark. Our Rep. Travis Nelson is the Chief Sponsor for the bill and so he spoke first. Then, I spoke; then our Senator Frederick. After this, we had several virtual or phone testimonies: from D2 Councilor Kanal, RJ DeMello [Chair of SJNA], Joe Purkey, Carina Solis [SJNA], Perrin Falkner [CPNA], Josh Hawk and Janel Hovde [both from St Johns Church].

We were so well-received that Co-Chair Rep. McClain specifically said [at the 26:10 mark] we – speaking of all of us involved, including the community overall, were “organized”, “professional”, “specific”, “direct”, and “did a good job”! And, she commented that she had read a lot of testimony. After that, Senator Pham said that “this is exactly the kind of infrastructure project... we need to fund”!

I feel very good about the Hearing. We have gone from a handful of people on the north peninsula knowing we have a problem to hundreds of people not only knowing but be willing to ACT, by emailing legislators and writing testimony. The result is now awareness of key state legislators as to our predicament and the need for change!

NOW WHAT HAPPENS AND WHAT DOES THE COMMUNITY DO?

First, let me outline my understanding of how things proceed. The Joint Transportation Committee will take a vote [called a “work session”. When? Hopefully, very soon]. A “do pass” vote means they recommend the bill. Then, it will move to the Ways and Means Committee. This is the committee that must also recommend any bill for which the state will spend money. Perhaps this is wishful thinking but I am hoping the Ways and Means Committee will not even hold a hearing [using, in part, all the testimony we’ve already submitted] but just take a vote to move the bill forward [that process is called a “work session”]. But who knows? In any event, once the bill successfully passes out of the committees it goes to a vote by the full House and Senate. If it passes there, then it goes to Governor Kotek to sign – and there is no doubt she will sign.

HERE’S WHAT WE NEED TO PAY HEED TO!!!

Most people – even many who live here – do NOT understand the problem. That is why I always include a map to show what it really means to live on a peninsula surrounded on three sides with soils that will liquify in the quake, a likely fuel-fed inferno with toxic smoke, and the only routes in/out over bridges that WILL collapse!

This means that most legislators do not know what the hell this bill really means – and they will vote on it!
Other legislators need help understanding what we are dealing with. I was grateful to see a number of testimonies submitted by relatives and friends of people here expressing concern for us and support of the bill. I recollect a woman from McMinnville who is worried about her daughter and son-in-law, for example. **WE MUST LOOK FOR THESE CONNECTIONS, PROVIDE THESE FOLKS WITH INFORMATION [I’ll create some flyers and this doc might be useful] AND TELL THEM THEY NEED TO LOBBY – AKA CONTACT – THEIR OWN STATE REPRESENTATIVE AND SENATOR AND TELL THEM THE IMPORTANCE OF VOTING FOR THIS BILL WHEN THE BILL MOVES TO A FULL VOTE!!**

We know that, unfortunately, there are people in other parts of Oregon who not only don’t understand what we are dealing with but are actively hostile to Portlanders, city people, any and all government spending, etc. I am not being partisan here or making sweeping generalizations. People are different everywhere. But, SOME

people – and sometimes they are THE LOUDEST – will NOT want the state to spend this money on our bridge! And, they love to submit testimony against bills.

FOR EXAMPLE, up until last night ALL our testimony was supportive. Now I see that some folks – who clearly have no idea what they are talking about, but who, for one or other of the reasons I alluded to above don't like this bill, are expressing objections. Again, these comments don't have to make any sense [I've read enough legislative testimony to assure you they sometimes don't!]. But, like all of us they have a right to be heard.

"If you want a pedestrian bridge, you pay for it. Not the US taxpayer. Tired of footing the bill for all the pet projects. I oppose this bill." [Note: It's NOT a ped bridge; in fact, it's a major freight corridor for all of Oregon!] Or...

"Transferring money to the City of Portland to do a study for this bridge is a waste of tax payers money. There are many other far more important projects that will help a greater number of people..." [Note: Check out RJ's testimony.] or...

"I don't support all these new taxes, or spending any of our money on pet projects in Portland. That bridge project is a total scam..." [Note: "pet project"?! a "scam"?! What???]

You can see all the testimony here. <https://olis.oregonlegislature.gov/liz/2025R1/Measures/Testimony/HB2749>

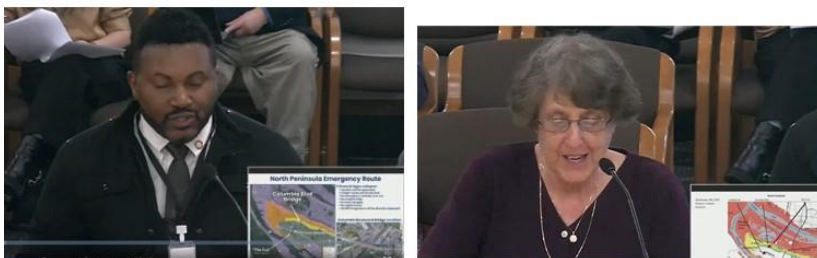
Yes, it's aggravating. THE QUESTION IS, HOW DO WE COUNTER THEIR OPPOSITION? We rally the people WE know outside of Portland to write to their legislators on behalf of the bill. Be clear about the need. Watch the testimony from April 14. You will get lots of ideas of why this is important. Tell you friends/relatives to watch the testimony [I have to say I am pleased with what I said! Also, RJ brought out some great arguments as to why this is a STATE issue.]. We can also write to legislators in other districts directly. Do you know any? It is easy to look them up [<https://www.oregonlegislature.gov/>].

I know it would be nice if having a good Hearing was enough to get our bill passed. But as I keep saying "this is how democracy works". And, since this is a state bill everyone in the state has a say. OUR "say" has to be stronger and more convincing than their "say". And the fact is, our "say" is stronger, it does make more sense. And, if those folks were in our situation they would be asking for exactly what we are asking for!!

The legislative session ends during June. That means we have two months that we need to be vigilant, responsive and be good citizen lobbyists for our cause. Do not let the naysayers get you down. ACT! Rep McClain said we are organized and professional. If we keep it up, we'll win!

April 14, 2025 Joint Transportation Committee

<https://olis.oregonlegislature.gov/liz/mediaplayer/?clientID=4879615486&eventID=2025041211>



Rep Travis Nelson

Donna Cohen

