



August 18, 2023

Hon. Pete Buttigieg  
Secretary of Transportation  
U.S. Department of Transportation  
1200 New Jersey Avenue, S.E.  
Washington, D.C. 20590

Dear Secretary Buttigieg:

We write in support of the application by Multnomah County, Oregon for federal funding to carry out the Earthquake Ready Burnside Bridge project utilizing the following U.S. Department of Transportation grant programs:

- National Infrastructure Project Assistance (Mega) program (packaged within the Multimodal Project Discretionary Grant [(MPDG) program)
- Nationally Significant Multimodal Freight and Highways Projects [INFRA] program (packaged within the Multimodal Project Discretionary Grant [MPDG] program)
- Bridge Investment Program (BIP)

If funded, this project will play a critical role in community safety, response, and economic recovery after a major earthquake, provide thousands of jobs in the Portland Metro Region, and move the region closer to its safety and multimodal transportation goals. At the end of its service life and in need of a major overhaul, the application by Multnomah County requests funding support to replace the 97-year-old Burnside Bridge in downtown Portland.

The Pacific Northwest regularly experiences some of the largest earthquakes in the world along the Cascadia Subduction Zone (CSZ). Geologists estimate there is a one in three chance that a CSZ earthquake with a magnitude of 8+ will strike the Portland region in the next 50 years.

Oregon's largest metro region and statewide economic driver currently does not have a downtown bridge that will be usable immediately after a major earthquake. Completion of Multnomah County's Earthquake Ready Burnside Bridge project will ensure that we have at least one downtown bridge that emergency responders can use after a major earthquake. Improving the condition of the Burnside Bridge and making it seismically resilient will improve the safety and reliability of the nearly 19-mile Burnside St. regional emergency lifeline route, stretching from Washington County to Gresham across the heart of the metro region.

In addition, the new bridge will provide safer, more modern multimodal transportation facilities, serving all modes and communities accessing the downtown core, especially adjacent neighborhoods which are primarily areas of persistent poverty and home to historically disadvantaged communities. This includes building ADA-compliant sidewalks to adjacent light



rail and social service providers, safer and more protected pedestrian and bicycle facilities on the bridge, preserving the existing bus-only lane, providing permanent bicycle/pedestrian street improvements adjacent to the bridge and preparing the bridge for a future streetcar line. This multifaceted infrastructure project addresses many urgent community needs, from earthquake resiliency to multimodal travel and the dependable movement of goods and services in and out of the city.

This project is also expected to promote short and long-term job creation by providing over 6,200 job years of employment, including for apprentices, women, and people of color.

We believe that the goals of this project align with the intents of the following federal grant programs as follows:

- **Mega Program:** EQRB is a large, complex project that is difficult to fund by other means and will have national and regional economic, mobility, and safety benefits.
- **INFRA Program:** EQRB is a multimodal project of national and regional significance to improve the safety, efficiency, and reliability of the movement of freight and people in and across rural and urban areas.
- **BIP:** EQRB will replace a critical bridge in poor condition and ensure the safety, efficiency, and reliability of the movement of people and freight over the bridge.

Multnomah County has demonstrated its commitment to focus local funding on the project by redirecting Vehicle Registration Fees, along with other local funding options, to support planning, design, and construction costs. In addition, the Oregon Legislature recognized EQRB's significance when it passed House Bill 5030 (2023), which authorized an initial \$20 million allocation for EQRB, with conversations ongoing to identify additional opportunities for investment in future Legislative sessions.

We urge you to help Multnomah County close the funding gap by giving your full and fair consideration of their application for this critical bridge replacement project.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "AH", is written over a light blue horizontal line.

Andrew Hoan  
President & CEO  
Portland Metro Chamber