October 6, 2016

Re: SR 14 non-local Truck Traffic

Dear Mr. Strickler,

Columbia Gorge communities are asking you for help. Cities in the Columbia Gorge along the Washington / Oregon border suffer from excessive truck traffic on Washington SR 14 due to a difference in tax methods between the two states. Oregon charges heavy trucks a weight-mile tax. Washington charges a fuel tax. Savvy truckers purchase their fuel in Oregon to avoid paying a State fuel tax, cross one of the bridges to Washington, and travel along SR 14 to avoid paying the weight-mile tax. This results in a large number of non-local trucks using Washington roads to avoid paying taxes to either state. It results in extra wear and tear on Washington’s roads as well as a large amount of extra truck traffic through Washington border towns like Stevenson and Bingen.

As you know, State Route 14 is the main street through downtown Stevenson and Bingen. The large number of trucks driving through the downtown areas negatively impact pedestrians and erodes the experience for tourists exploring our beautiful downtown areas.

The City of Stevenson has taken many actions to try to address the excess truck traffic, including conducting traffic and pedestrian safety surveys, installation of flashing radar feedback signs at both ends of town, pedestrian crossing flags on SR 14, a designated truck route on city-owned 1st Street to bypass the downtown area, additional speed limit signs on 1st Street, and working with our Sheriff’s Office to increase enforcement in the downtown area.

We paid for a traffic control study of the 1st Street / Russell Avenue intersection and are currently holding town hall meetings to discuss the possibility of removing the east-west stop signs on 1st Street to encourage additional east-bound trucks to use 1st Street.

We considered the use of speed safety cameras but concluded they are cost prohibitive for small communities.

We approached Senator King’s office about this issue, asking for more information and his assistance. Senator King informed us that the current transportation budget does include continued funding for the Washington State Transportation Commission to evaluate the road usage charge concept, but was unable to offer direct assistance for this continuing problem.
We looked into the possibility of adding pedestrian crossing lights and stop signs on SR 14, but were told by WSDOT that neither would be allowed by WSDOT.

We recently explored the possibility of working with WSDOT to pursue a National Scenic Byway designation for SR 14, but were told by the FHWA that the National Scenic Byway designation, by itself, does not involve any commercial vehicle restrictions.

We understand that jurisdiction of SR 14 lays with the Washington State Department of Transportation, and we are asking for any assistance you can provide that might help limit the amount of truck traffic, non-local truck traffic in particular, driving SR 14 through our downtown areas.

Please do what you can to help with this problem.

Sincerely,

Frank Cox, Mayor, City of Stevenson
October 10, 2016

Mr. Kris Strickler  
Southwest Regional Administrator  
Washington State Department of Transportation  
11018 NE 51st Circle  
Vancouver, WA 98682-6686

Dear Mr. Strickler:

The OneGorge Advocacy Group is a network of public agencies and private businesses from Oregon and Washington communities throughout the Columbia River Gorge working together to advocate for regional priorities. The undersigned participants of OneGorge wish to express our support for your efforts to address the critical issue of the overuse of WA SR 14 by heavy haul trucks resulting from the differing tax methods between the two states. There is real financial incentive for savvy truckers to fuel up in Oregon (to avoid gas tax), and drive on SR 14 in Washington (to avoid weight-mile tax).

We understand that the disparate taxing methods of the states is not something your agency can address directly. We are, however, asking for any assistance you can provide to address the real, on-the-ground problems that are occurring. As you know, SR 14 is the main throughfare for the communities of Stevenson, Bingen, and Lyle. All of these communities have been very proactive in addressing the problem in any way that they can. These communities have made significant investments in road and signalling infrastructure to address the serious safety concerns this issue raises in their communities. We urge your agency to do all that it can to be creative, proactive, and supportive of any effort that could possibly help these small Washington communities bear the burden of such heavy and ill-fitting traffic use of their main streets.

Additionally, we invite you to engage our group for support of your efforts, coordinated advocacy aimed at affecting real change on this issue in either state, and any other help we might provide.

Sincerely,

The Undersigned, facilitated by OneGorge

[Signatures]

Frank Cox, Mayor  
City of Stevenson, WA

Krystyna Wolniakowski  
Interim Executive Director, Columbia River Gorge Commission

Mike Glover, Executive Director  
Hood River County Chamber of Commerce

Tammara Tippel, Executive Director, Mt. Adams Chamber of Commerce
October 6, 2016

Mr. Kris Strickler  
Southwest Regional Administrator  
Washington State Department of Transportation  
11018 NE 51st Circle  
Vancouver WA 98682-6686

Subject: Washington State Route 14 Truck Traffic

Dear Mr. Strickler:

The City of Bingen, along with other cities along the Washington/Oregon border, suffers from excessive truck traffic on Washington State Route 14 due to a difference in tax methods between the two states. The State of Oregon charges heavy trucks a weight-mile tax while the State of Washington charges a fuel tax.

Truck drivers can purchase their fuel in Oregon to avoid paying a state fuel tax and then cross one of the bridges into Washington traveling along State Route 14 to avoid paying the Oregon weight-mile tax. This results in a large number of out-of-state trucks using Washington roads to avoid paying taxes in either state. This type of truck traffic results in extra wear and tear on Washington’s roads, as well as a large amount of non-local truck traffic travelling through Washington border towns like the City of Bingen.

We understand that the disparate taxing methods of the two states is not something your agency can address directly. However, we are asking for any assistance you can provide to address the problems that are occurring. State Route 14 is the main thoroughfare through Bingen, as well as others in the Columbia Gorge. This problem can be exasperated when Interstate 84 is closes and all traffic is diverted to State Route 14 on the Washington side. We have been proactive in trying to address this problem by installing crosswalks and additional pedestrian signage but feel safety issues still exist.

Thank you for considering our request. We look forward to discussing this issue with you in the future.

Sincerely,

Betty J. Barnes  
Mayor

Cc: City of Bingen City Council