



City of Stevenson

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January 18, 2018

Port of Cascade Locks Commission
355 WaNaPa Street
P.O. Box 307
Cascade Locks, OR 97014

Dear Commissioners,

The City of Stevenson supports the development of a safe non-motorized multi-use trail as part of your vision for the next phase of safely integrating the Pacific Crest Trail with the Bridge of the Gods. The infrastructure improvements, which would support a dedicated path for connecting the Pacific Crest Trail between Oregon and Washington for pedestrians, horses, and bicycles, could allow for this bridge to become one of the most popular attractions in the Columbia River Gorge—not to mention an enormous asset to the area's world-class trails, bike paths, and historic routes already converging in the region.

As the scenic Gorge increases in popularity, and the population grows in the Northwest, traffic numbers on trails and road increase and the use of the Bridge of the Gods as an emergency bypass occurs on an increased frequency (rerouting SR-14 or I-84). This has presented a number of conflicts for the modes of traffic that currently use the bridge. The additional planning and design efforts will allow the Port and Stakeholders to identify a solution that will safely integrate different modes of traffic to flow more freely across the Columbia River connecting both sides of the Pacific Crest Trail.

The Bridge of the Gods is an iconic landmark, sitting at the crossroads of commerce, recreation and history. As the only river crossing for 50 miles between Portland and Hood River, it is critical to commercial and recreational vehicular traffic, as well as non-motorized travelers within the recreation-rich Columbia Gorge National Scenic Area. The Bridge acts as the sole connection for the Pacific Crest Trail across the Columbia River.

The bridge provides a spectacular 360-degree view of the Columbia River Gorge National scenic area. The view from the bridge, in combination with the thrill of standing high above the water, makes for the perfect location to stand, take pictures and observe the beautiful scenery abound. Were it not for the limited access and the constant vehicular traffic passing by in close proximity to both trail users and casual tourists, this experience would be breathtaking. During the summer, 6,000 plus cars and trucks cross the bridge each day, coinciding with the highest season for non-motorized recreation in the City of Cascade Locks. Imagine how nervous hikers, cyclists, and equestrians feel while crossing this narrow bridge, 1/3 mile-long, with nothing to separate them from traffic. The water, 140 feet below, is visible under their feet through the steel grate deck. The potential for disaster is high when tractor-trailers must swerve to navigate around pedestrians.

The City's Vision encourages a network of recreational opportunities to support a high quality of life for those that live here. We commend the Port for identifying outdoor recreation as a principal economic driver for the local community, and for including safe passage for non-motorized recreationists and travelers in its strategic plan. Huge transportation improvements such as this don't happen overnight. We thank the Port for getting the process going by undertaking the initial Bridge of the Gods structure feasibility study in 2012. More recently, in 2015 the Port completed a more comprehensive study of trail system between Wa Na Pa Street (Hwy 30) thru to SR-14, and are now working toward obtaining a grant to cover the planning and design phases of the project. We are part of the broad and diverse community behind this important project, and we support you in seeking funding to complete it.

Sincerely,

Scott Anderson, Mayor