



TO: Columbia River Gorge Commission
FROM: Krystyna U. Wolniakowski
DATE: May 14, 2019
SUBJECT: **INFORMATION ITEM***: Update on the Hood River Bridge Replacement Process

Background

Replacement of the Hood River Bridge has been discussed for decades. Built in 1924, it was constructed using open grid steel decking and measures 4,418 feet long. The lift span was added in 1938. It was built without any bike or pedestrian access. In 2003 and 2004, the Gorge Commission received several briefings from ODOT, WSDOT and RTC on a vision for a new multi-modal bridge. Several public workshops and agency meetings were held to discuss designs and the environmental review process that would be needed. Commissioners discussed whether the bridge would be exempt from Management Plan review since the bridge landings were in designated urban areas, however the bridge itself was over the Columbia River designated as GMA. If the bridge would not be exempt, then what scenic protections apply, and should the Management Plan be amended to reflect these standards? The Commission decided that the new Hood River Bridge would not be exempt from National Scenic Area standards and a new section was written and added to the 2004 version of the Management Plan on the Columbia River Bridge Replacement (Pages II-7-63 and 64). Please see Attachment A for the 2-page excerpt from the Management Plan. A history of Commission discussions from 2003 and 2004 is also included as Attachment B.

In 2004, a “Feasibility Study and Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS)” was completed. In 2011, a “Bridge Type, Size, and Location Study” was completed. In 2018, the Port of Hood River received a \$5 million grant from Oregon to complete NEPA/Final EIS by late 2020.

Gorge Commission Engagement

As part of the Final EIS development, a working group was established, and Commission Chair Lorrie DeKay was invited to participate. In addition, Commission staff have met with Port of Hood River staff and consultants to provide input on the interpretation of the criteria listed in the Management Plan, which will be vitally important as the bridge design phase begins. The Management Plan clearly states the bridge must be “*visually unobtrusive and harmonious with the surrounding Gorge landscape and the Columbia River*” ...and “*include historic design elements*”. Other issues to discuss in the next year include the permitting process—will the Gorge Commission (for Klickitat County) or Hood River County be the lead permitting agency? **Kevin Greenwood**, Hood River Bridge Replacement Project Director, will provide an update for the Commission on current goals and timelines at the May 14, 2019 Commission meeting.