

## Together

by Michael McElwee,  
Port Executive Director



Michael McElwee

**The** Port of Hood River has 31 full and part-time regular employees. Of these, 10 reside in the State of Washington. The aggregate annual salary and benefits of our Washington employees equals

about \$850,000. This is a simple reflection of the bi-state nature of the Mid-Columbia Region. Whenever a new job position is open, applications are received from both states. We hire the best candidate, no matter the zip code. As we should.

More generally, the Port's efforts provide tangible benefits to residents of both states. When the salmon are running or during the summer boating season, you'll often see Washington license plates in the majority at the Marina parking lot. Parks, trails, and recreation sites on the Hood River Waterfront are used by, and benefit, all. Businesses in Port buildings draw employees from throughout the bi-state area. The Gorge economy is driven primarily by the people and businesses in our small region in Oregon and Washington.

The Hood River-White Salmon Interstate Bridge itself is a tangible example of bi-state connectivity. A critical link in the region's transportation system, it connects people to services, jobs, schools, health and medical care on both sides of the Columbia River. But as is well known, the bridge is nearly 100 years old. The need to replace it is more important than ever, but the project is very large for our area's population size. We are a collection of small, rural communities remote from urban areas that more frequently attract attention for sizable federal or state funding commitments needed for such projects. We are making solid strides toward bridge replacement,

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# Bridge Replacement Project Updates



## Bridge replacement conceptual design

**The** Port of Hood River is making strides toward its Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), needed to advance replacement of the Hood River – White Salmon Bridge. The agency has completed the majority of technical reports and is currently working with tribal agencies to complete the Cultural Resource Reports. These critical documents will contribute to the Supplemental Draft EIS (SDEIS) projected to be released later this year. The Final EIS and Record of Decision (ROD) is expected to be issued in mid-2021.

The Port has been advancing the project to complete the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) which would position the project for future funding and construction, with funding provided by the state of Oregon.

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the federal law signed by President Nixon in 1970, requires that government actions (primarily capital projects) thoroughly evaluate projects or activities expected to have significant environmental impacts and/or require federal funding.

To guide the project through the complexities of the NEPA process, the Port has secured the services of WSP USA to perform environmental engineering services and develop the Supplemental Draft EIS, Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) and ROD. The Port's Bridge Replacement Project Director, Kevin Greenwood is overseeing the project.

As technical studies conclude, and the project moves firmly into the Environmental Compliance phase, project tasks are shifting.

## What's new on the project?

- The Preliminary Navigation Determination has been issued by the US Coast Guard, which confirms horizontal and vertical clearances under the new bridge.
- Identifying significant cultural resources (archaeological and structures) that may be affected by the project.
- Continuing coordination with the US Bureau of Indian Affairs to address project impacts to lands administered by that agency.

- Continuing consultation with the four Treaty Tribes on cultural resources, fishing activities, treaty rights, and other interests that relate to the project.
- Engaging the National Marine Fisheries Service, Federal Highway Administration, Oregon and Washington Departments of Fish and Wildlife, and ODOT to discuss project impacts to threatened and endangered species and habitat, as well as potential conservation measures.
- Preparing the Supplemental Draft EIS for policy compliance review by FHWA to serve as an addendum to the Draft EIS published in 2003.

The supplement will review critical habitat (a new protected resource since the original DEIS), investigate archeological resources, plus address recent developments in resources and policies that guide environmental impacts. The SDEIS should streamline the process for the FEIS.

Next steps will include: determining effects on significant cultural resources by the project, continuing to consult with Native American tribes and other federal agencies, preparing the draft cultural resources report, submitting the draft biological assessment for technical review by FHWA, ODOT and liaisons to the National Marine Fisheries Service, and integrating cultural and biological baseline conditions, impacts and mitigation into the Supplemental Draft EIS.

Once the Final EIS and ROD are received in mid-2021, bridge replacement work will focus more on where funding for design, permits, studies and construction could come from. The Port has accumulated over \$2.5 million for bridge repair and replacement. Port representatives continue to lobby actively in Salem, Olympia, and Washington DC to educate, inform and prepare for future phases of the bridge. Near-completion of NEPA helps significantly in these efforts, however, it is estimated the entire bridge replacement project will take approximately 10-years. ●

## Port of Cascade Locks implements BREEZEBy

### System transponders enable discounted tolls for both toll bridges in the Gorge

**The** Port of Hood River's BreezeBy electronic tolling system has been operational at the Bridge of the Gods in Cascade Locks since January 6.

Bridge users who have signed up for BreezeBy will pay only \$1.25 per crossing at the Bridge of the Gods, and \$1.00 at the Hood River-White Salmon Interstate Bridge, versus \$2.00 cash tolls at both bridges. (Toll rates depend on vehicle class, with larger class vehicle tolls determined by the number of axles.)

Current Port of Hood River BreezeBy customers don't need to do anything to be able to use their transponders on the Bridge of the Gods. BreezeBy customer account statements will depict which bridge was crossed for each charge to the account balance.

In Cascade Locks, BreezeBy transponders replace the Port of Cascade Locks "Local Stickers" and coupon books that have traditionally provided local commuters with discounted tolls. After February 3, coupons are no longer valid for toll payment on the Bridge of the Gods, but customers can convert unused bridge coupon value to BreezeBy account



BreezeBy transponder attaches to windshield.

credit at either Port office during regular business hours.

Please see **BreezeBy** on page **PN 2**

**Together** *continued from page 1*

but expect the journey to be a long one.

Thankfully, that bi-state nature of the Mid-Columbia region is our greatest strength. Because of it, we have access to senior elected officials in both states, two state transportation departments, and twice the brain power, resources, support, and political influence. Because of it, a group of consultants, staff and government representatives from both states have been working together to complete the three-year long federal environmental review process, a critical first step. Now a smaller group of local officials representing the cities of Bingen, White Salmon and Hood River, along with Hood River and Klickitat counties have begun meeting to anticipate the significant permitting, funding, and ownership hurdles ahead. We are grateful for this bi-state cooperation and focused work effort. Without it, successful bridge replacement is unlikely.

For its part, the Port of Hood River must also look to a future without a bridge. We are currently working to update our Strategic Business Plan that guides priorities, policies, and projects over the next six years. Within this timeframe, I believe it will become clear whether the bridge can be replaced, or whether a large capital investment will need to be made to the existing bridge to keep it functioning safely. At that time, either way, the Port's operations will need to undergo significant changes. ●

# Port focuses on Strategic Business Plan

In 2020, the Port of Hood River will initiate major updates to its Strategic Business Plan (Plan), the guiding document for the Port Commission and staff regarding policies, operations, and projects over the next five or more years.

The process to prepare the Plan, including its final content and structure, must address significant future challenges on the horizon. As such, the organization has identified numerous key considerations to be covered in the Plan process.

## KEY CONSIDERATIONS:

- **Evaluate Critically.** What has the Port done in the past, how has the landscape changed, what should be the Port's core mission going forward?
- **Build from Evidence.** Strategies and actions should be based upon a thorough evaluation of challenges and opportunities presented to the Port. The Plan should identify criteria for assessing how strategies and actions will perform in addressing these challenges and opportunities so that the best strategies and actions are adopted and pursued.
- **Address Uncertainty.** The future of the current bridge and the potential loss of toll revenue is a significant unknown. The Plan should acknowledge this uncertainty and incorporate flexibility, contingency and monitoring into its Plan.
- **Prioritize Functions.** Each of the wide array of functions that the Port carries out should be evaluated and prioritized from the standpoint of the current and future benefits each provides.
- **Engage the Public.** Preparation of the Plan should include a significant public outreach effort including a public survey (see enclosed). The Plan is an opportunity to better inform the public as to the Port's current activities and seek critical input.
- **Consider Different Audiences.** The form and content of the final Plan should allow stakeholders with different purposes and backgrounds, to quickly get the information they deem relevant. That objective likely cannot be achieved with a single document.

Several assessments have been completed or are in the works to provide the Port Commission with concrete and contextual data on facilities, assets, and infrastructure, including the Port's Interstate Bridge, Ken Jernstedt Airfield, port-owned buildings and land, waterfront development and recreation sites. Local economic data and trends will be considered as part of the strategic planning process.

"The Strategic Plan is intended to be a near-term playbook," Port Executive Director Michael McElwee advises. "But we also want to think about the long-term future because of our important role as stewards of public assets." McElwee considers

**We want to hear from you!**  
Please provide your input with the attached Port survey.

The Port's survey is also available online at: [bit.ly/porthoodriver](http://bit.ly/porthoodriver)

*Thank you for taking time to provide your thoughts.*

one of the most important pieces of the Plan to be the Key Projects List, prioritized in order to not only focus the Port on its goals, but to qualify potential projects for State funding.

Public input is an important and valued part of the process. Public meetings are being scheduled in February, March, and May – check local news outlets and portofhoodriver.com for details. A community survey is available online through March 6th, with a print version included in this newsletter.

## Methods of providing input to the Port for its Plan include:

- Filling out and mailing the survey on **page 3**
- Responding to an online survey posted at [bit.ly/porthoodriver](http://bit.ly/porthoodriver)
- Writing a letter or email to the Port
  - **Mail letters to:** Port of Hood River, 1000 E. Port Marina Dr., Hood River, OR 97031
  - **Send an email to:** [porthr@gorge.net](mailto:porthr@gorge.net)

## Plan process and schedule

The Port Commission will revisit its mission and values as part of the Plan process and conduct a "Situation Assessment" for the Port. Key plan elements will include a Management Plan, Financial Plan, Facilities Plan, and Economic Development Plan covering all the Port's major interests including the bridge, airport, waterfront development, and waterfront recreation within the context of the region.

Project planning began last fall, and the effort is expected to conclude in June 2020 for a Strategic Business Plan that guides Port operations through 2026.

For further details, the complete schedule and background documents, visit [www.portofhoodriver.com](http://www.portofhoodriver.com). ●

## BreezeBy *continued from page 1*

New BreezeBy customers can open an account online and receive their transponders in the mail. There are no fees to open an account, and each account receives one transponder for free; each additional transponder costs \$5.00.

New accounts can be created online at [portofcascadelocks.org](http://portofcascadelocks.org) or [portofhoodriver.com](http://portofhoodriver.com). There is no required personal identification to open an account, but each transponder is linked to a specific vehicle so the make, model, color, year, and license plate number is required. New customers should expect to receive their new transponders in the mail within 3-4 business days, depending on the volume of orders. New customers can also open accounts at either Port office during regular business hours. New accounts cannot be created at the toll booths, however, due to traffic flow and safety concerns.

The "BreezeBy" system was first implemented for the Hood River-White Salmon Interstate Bridge in 2006, establishing the first electronic tolling system in Oregon. The system utilizes prepaid funds and transponders to facilitate faster commutes through the toll plaza and provide user discounts.

For more information, contact the Port of Cascade Locks via email to [rvollans@portofcascadelocks.org](mailto:rvollans@portofcascadelocks.org) or stop by the Port office at office at 427 Portage Road in Cascade Locks. Questions can also be directed to the Port of Hood River via email to [porthr@gorge.net](mailto:porthr@gorge.net), or visit the Port office at 1000 E. Port Marina Drive in Hood River. ●



# Strategic Business Plan Public Input Survey

Please submit by March 6th

Welcome! Over the past five years, our region has seen significant changes to its economy, with both new and enduring challenges facing businesses and families. The Port of Hood River wants to better serve the community by understanding your needs and thoughts on the Port's role in the region. The Port will use the input you provide as it completes a planning process to develop its 2020-2026 Strategic Business Plan.

*This survey will take about 8 minutes to complete.*

*An online version is available at [bit.ly/porthoodriver](http://bit.ly/porthoodriver)*

**What is the biggest issue facing our community?**

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## KEN JERNSTEDT AIRFIELD

The Ken Jernstedt Airfield is a General Aviation airport with a 3,040' runway and an alternate grass landing area. The airport offers self-serve fueling, private pilot training, glider rides and club, sight-seeing flights, and mechanic services. The airport serves the WAAAM museum, hosts of the annual Hood River Fly-In. The airport also provides hangar space for aviation technology companies, private aircraft, and serves as a base of operations for wildfire response and emergency search and rescue operations.

**How would you describe the importance of the airport and its role in our community?**

- Critically Important
- Somewhat Important
- Don't Know/No Opinion
- Very Important
- Not Important

**Please indicate how well you feel the airfield is currently maintained and operated?**

- Very Well
- Somewhat Poorly
- Don't Know/No Opinion
- Well
- Very Poorly

**For the following questions, please indicate whether you agree or disagree with the following statements:**

*The Port should develop hangar spaces at the airport to support growth of local aviation technology industry.*

- Agree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Don't know

*The Port should invest in improvements to the airport that would attract or expand its current use.*

- Agree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Don't know

*Noise from activities at the airfield are a significant issue in my home or neighborhood.*

- Agree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Don't know

## WATERFRONT PARKS AND OPEN SPACES

The Port of Hood River has developed and maintained most of the beaches, parks, and recreational open spaces along the Hood River waterfront area for many years, including the Event Site beach, Frog Beach, the small boat dock at Nichols Basin, the Hook launch, Marina Green, the Marina swim beach, the access road to the Spit, and the Waterfront Trail. Unlike most parks that are funded by property-tax based revenue, the ongoing operation and maintenance of Port-owned parks are, to a certain extent, funded by paid parking that was first implemented in 2018.

**How would you describe the importance of the waterfront parks, beaches, and open spaces to our community?**

- Critically Important
- Somewhat Important
- Don't Know/No Opinion
- Very Important
- Not Important

**Please indicate how well you feel the Port-owned sites listed above are currently maintained and operated?**

- Very Well
- Somewhat Poorly
- Don't Know/No Opinion
- Well
- Very Poorly

**For the following questions, please indicate whether you agree or disagree with the following statements:**

*The Port should seek to expand and increase the use of current waterfront recreational facilities.*

- Agree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Don't know

*The Port should work to restore natural habitat areas and improve natural functions at the mouth of the Hood River and other areas of the waterfront.*

- Agree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Don't know

*The Port should collaborate with the County and the Hood River Valley Parks and Recreation District to identify efficiencies and cost savings in parks maintenance and operations.*

- Agree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Don't know

*The Port should actively work to improve water access opportunities and invest in further development of waterfront recreational facilities.*

- Agree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Don't know

## HOOD RIVER MARINA

The Hood River Marina provides a free-to-use guest boat launch for fishing and other recreational uses as well as Sheriff and Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission (CRITFC) enforcement patrols on the Columbia. The Marina also provides long-term moorage for privately owned boats in over 160 boat slips and several boat houses, as well as short-term cruise ship and large vessel docking.

**How would you describe the importance of the Marina and its role in our community?**

- Critically Important
- Somewhat Important
- Don't Know/No Opinion
- Very Important
- Not Important

**Please indicate how well you feel the Marina is currently maintained and operated?**

- Very Well
- Somewhat Poorly
- Don't Know/No Opinion
- Well
- Very Poorly

**For the following questions, please indicate whether you agree or disagree with the following statements:**

*It is important to have free, public boat launch access for fishing and other recreational uses.*

- Agree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Don't know

*It is important for Hood River to have a marina for long-term moorage of private sailboats and vessels.*

- Agree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Don't know

*It is important to provide Youth Sailing educational programs at the Hood River Marina.*

- Agree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Don't know

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The Port owns and manages industrial and commercial properties, as well as several parcels of undeveloped industrial zone land. Even though the public may not often visit or recreate near these properties, they provide direct and indirect economic benefit to the region in terms of job creation, wages and revenue.

**How would you describe the importance of economic development activities to support the retention and expansion of locally-owned businesses?**

- Critically Important
- Somewhat Important
- Don't Know/No Opinion
- Very Important
- Not Important

**How would you describe the importance of economic development activities to attract new businesses and industries to our area?**

- Critically Important
- Somewhat Important
- Don't Know/No Opinion
- Very Important
- Not Important

**For the following questions, please indicate whether you agree or disagree with the following statements:**

*It is important that the Port of Hood River maintain its real estate portfolio to enable local businesses to operate and grow.*

- Agree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Don't know

*It is important to have developable properties ready to support the growth and retention of locally owned light industrial businesses.*

- Agree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Don't know



**Strategic Business Plan Public Input Survey - continued from page PN 3**



**HOOD RIVER-WHITE SALMON INTERSTATE BRIDGE**

With narrow lanes, lack of safety shoulders, difficult barge navigation, and no bike or pedestrian path, the Hood River-White Salmon Bridge does not meet current needs of travelers. The Port is engaged in efforts to replace the nearly 100-year old bridge but expects that effort to take several years and the new bridge will require significant changes to traffic patterns, tolling, local control, and operations.

**How would you describe the importance of the bridge connecting Hood River to Bingen and White Salmon for our community?**

- Critically Important
- Somewhat Important
- Don't Know/No Opinion
- Very Important
- Not Important

**Please indicate how well you feel the current bridge is maintained and operated?**

- Very Well
- Somewhat Poorly
- Don't Know/No Opinion
- Well
- Very Poorly

**For the following questions, please indicate whether you agree or disagree with the following statements:**

*Tolls should be set as low as possible, even if that means delaying replacement of the current bridge.*

- Agree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Don't know

*The replacement of the bridge with a new, modern structure is so important that the Port should ask residents to consider a higher toll to make it happen.*

- Agree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Don't know

*The new bridge must have bicycle and pedestrian access and amenities.*

- Agree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Don't know

*The new bridge should be owned and operated by a state agency (either ODOT or WSDOT or a combination of both).*

- Agree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Don't know

*The new bridge should be owned and operated by a local agency or authority.*

- Agree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Don't know

*The new bridge should be owned and operated by a private party or a public-private partnership.*

- Agree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Don't know

**PORT PUBLIC SERVICES AND FACILITIES**

The Port is focused on optimizing operations while continuing to provide needed public facilities and services. There are 23 Port Districts in Oregon, each supporting long-term economic development in their communities. Their role in attracting jobs and private investment can be especially beneficial in rural areas where industrial infrastructure might not otherwise be developed. Some ports, like the Port of Hood River, also maintain transportation infrastructure and public recreational facilities such as parks and boat launches.

**How would you describe the importance of the Port for our community?**

- Critically Important
- Somewhat Important
- Don't Know/No Opinion
- Very Important
- Not Important

**Please indicate how well you feel the Port is currently is managed and operated?**

- Very Well
- Somewhat Poorly
- Don't Know/No Opinion
- Well
- Very Poorly

**For the following questions, please indicate whether you agree or disagree with the following statements:**

*The Port should work to identify efficiencies to reduce the cost and scope of its operations.*

- Agree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Don't know

*The Port should increase its investments to improve the quality of its level of service and maintenance of its facilities.*

- Agree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Don't know

*The Port should seek to develop collaborative partnerships with other agencies (like the City, County, Parks & Rec, etc.) to deliver existing services.*

- Agree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Don't know

**What should be the Port's highest priority for the next six years?**

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**TELL US MORE ABOUT YOURSELF**

**How do you identify?**

- Female
- Non-Binary
- Male
- Prefer to self-describe

**The median household income in the Hood River area is about \$50,000 per year. Was your household income in 2019?**

- Below the median
- Right at or near the median
- Above the median

**How do you identify yourself culturally?**

- Asian or Pacific Islander
- Caucasian or White
- Native American or Native Alaskan
- Latin(x)/Hispanic
- African American
- Other

*Thank you for taking time to provide your thoughts.*

**Please return your survey to the Port of Hood River by March 6th.**

**You may drop it off or mail it to:**

**Port of Hood River**  
1000 E. Port Marina Drive  
Hood River, OR 97031

**Send your survey via email to:**  
porthr@gorge.net

**The Port's survey is also available online at:**  
<http://bit.ly/porthoodriver>

**The Port is planning to hold public meetings to receive comment on the 2020-2026 Strategic Business Plan. The first meeting is:**

**STRATEGIC BUSINESS PLAN OPEN HOUSE**

**Thursday, February 20, 6-8pm**  
Port of Hood River Conference Room  
1000 E. Port Marina Drive, Hood River

**All meetings will be announced in the Hood River News and the Port's website at portofhoodriver.com. Follow us on Facebook (Facebook.com/PortofHoodRiver) and Twitter (Twitter.com/PortofHoodRiver) for updates.**

If you would like to provide more information, comments, suggestions, or thoughts for the Port to consider in developing its strategic plan, or on any Port-related issue, please write to us at [porthr@gorge.net](mailto:porthr@gorge.net).