



For Immediate Release
November 16, 2021

**Cascadia Innovation Corridor Conference Returns with Focus on Open Borders,
Sustainability**

Business, academic and government leaders from British Columbia, Washington state and Oregon discuss vision for the Cascadia region

VANCOUVER, BC. – Nov. 16, 2021 – Today, leaders from both sides of the US-Canadian border are announcing key steps forward to promote business expansion, academic collaboration, and environmental sustainability in British Columbia, Washington, and Oregon. The announcements are part of the 5th annual Cascadia Innovation Corridor Conference, which returned after disruption in 2020 due to COVID-19 restrictions.

After more than a year of border restrictions, the 2021 conference provides an opportunity to have a constructive cross-border dialogue on how the Cascadia region can sustain an open border and promote a robust shared economy. Speakers will highlight ways to help the Cascadia region adjust to rapid growth, transportation challenges, and rising housing costs while preserving a high quality of life for the people who live here.

Ahead of the discussion on these important issues, today Governor Jay Inslee of Washington state, Governor Kate Brown of Oregon, and Premier John Horgan of British Columbia [signed an MOU](#) that establishes ultra-high-speed transportation as a regional priority. **The agreement reaffirms – on behalf of the residents in Washington state, Oregon, and British Columbia – their shared commitment to developing a sustainable Cascadia Innovation Corridor.**

Momentum continues to grow for an [ultra-high-speed transportation system](#) that links British Columbia, Washington state, and Oregon. A [2018 study from the Washington State Department of Transportation](#) found that a high-speed rail system linking Vancouver, Seattle, and Portland would spark up to \$355B in economic growth in Cascadia while reducing harmful emissions and creating downstream benefits for affordable housing, environmental sustainability, and more. In the United States, the recently signed Bipartisan Infrastructure law presents new opportunities to pursue federal funding to significantly advance the development of an ultra-high-speed transportation system that would unify our region. In addition, Congress is currently working on a dedicated high-speed rail funding program.

This year's conference includes speakers and panelists who focus on achieving economic competitiveness, empowering communities, and tackling the Cascadia region's most persistent societal challenges.

- Opening keynote by Brad Smith, President and Vice Chair of Microsoft – Smith's keynote will focus on insights and strategies to create a sustainable region.
- Panel conversation with Premier Horgan and Governor Inslee– Leaders from across the Pacific Northwest will focus on sustainable collaboration and strengthening cross-border partnerships.
- Panel conversation with Matt Morrison, CEO of Pacific NorthWest Economic Region (PNWER), Laurie Trautman, Director of the Border Policy Research Institute, and Chris Sands, Director of the Wilson Center's Canada Institute – Policy and issue experts will discuss innovation in the coming years to achieve a more sustainable border.
- Panel conversation with Jock Finlayson, Senior Policy Advisor with the Business Council of BC, Ali Myers, Human Resources Director at Boeing, and Ryan Peterson, VP at Unity Technologies – Industry experts will discuss the future of work and talent in Cascadia.

Since 2016, the Cascadia Innovation Corridor has advanced critical issues that impact millions of people across the Cascadia region, such as transportation, life sciences, higher education research, and more.

John Horgan, Premier of British Columbia: "The Cascadia Innovation Corridor Conference is an opportunity to advance the spirit of collaboration that has long united the Pacific Northwest. We know that British Columbia is stronger when we work together with our neighbors in the US, and we're excited to grow as a global hub of innovation and economic opportunity."

Jay Inslee, Governor of Washington state: "The Cascadia Innovation Corridor reflects our shared belief that regional challenges and opportunities require regional solutions. We know that exchanging ideas and entrepreneurship across borders will build our economies and improve our quality of life in Washington state, British Columbia, and Oregon. We intend to do just that with the memorandum of understanding that we signed earlier today. We will coordinate with our partners on pursuing federal funding for high-speed rail and engage communities throughout our region."

Kate Brown, Governor of Oregon: "Oregon has long been a proponent of cross-border initiatives that help the entire Pacific Northwest thrive. The Cascadia Innovation Corridor is a shining example of what we can achieve through partnership in shared research, transportation infrastructure, and other crucial systems that unite the region."

Greg D'Avignon, President and CEO of the Business Council of British Columbia: "Despite the shared challenges stemming from COVID-19, the Cascadia Innovation Corridor has

maintained our promising momentum and is moving forward through stronger relationships with a common purpose. The spirit of collaboration and innovation that underlies Cascadia has never been more important as we reopen the border and once again invest in shared and sustainable growth."

Chris Gregoire, CEO, Challenge Seattle, former Washington Governor: "COVID-19 closed the US-Canada border for the first time in more than a century, dividing close communities and impacting our shared economy. We need cross-border collaboration more than ever to spur regional recovery and craft a bold vision for the future of the Cascadia Innovation Corridor so that these gates never close again."

Brad Smith, President and Vice Chair of Microsoft: "Five years ago we convened the first Cascadia Innovation Corridor Conference with a shared vision of how our communities could accomplish more by working together. Today, despite unforeseeable challenges, that vision remains strong. And while we celebrate our progress to date, we can't stop now. It's time to act on generational ideas like high-speed rail that will create new opportunities for people in our region and will connect employers, researchers, and world class academic institutions."

About the Cascadia Innovation Corridor Initiative: The Cascadia Innovation Corridor Initiative, led by the [Business Council of British Columbia](#) and [Challenge Seattle](#) links Vancouver, BC, Seattle, and Portland, holding the promise of increasing economic opportunity beyond what the cities and their surrounding regions could expect to achieve independently. With a focus on areas including sustainable agriculture, life sciences, higher education, research excellence, transformative technologies, the efficient movement of people and goods across border, best and diverse talent, transportation, housing and connectivity, the Cascadia Innovation Corridor is committed to enhancing the lives of people living in the region, and beyond. Read more about the Cascadia Innovation Corridor [here](#).

For more information, contact:

Caylyn Rolph-Tate, Challenge Seattle: Caylyn@challengeseattle.com

Cheryl Muir, Business Council of British Columbia: cheryl.muir@bccbc.com