



Oregon

Kate Brown, Governor

Department of Transportation

Director's Office

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DATE: April 6, 2017

TO: House Committee on Veterans and Emergency Preparedness

FROM: Paul Mather, Administrator
ODOT Highway Division

SUBJECT: House Bill 3207

INTRODUCTION

House Bill 3207 directs the Oregon Department of Transportation to install and maintain markers indicating the Atomic Veterans Memorial Highway on Interstate 5 from Albany to Salem.

DISCUSSION

The legislature has designated a number of Oregon's border to border highways over the last several sessions to honor a number of veterans groups. In addition, the legislature has instituted a program by which the Oregon Department of Transportation can install signs to honor individual police officers and members of the military who are killed in the line of duty.

These signs serve to remind the public of the sacrifices these officers, members of the military and their families have made. ODOT must balance installing memorial signs with needed regulatory, guide and motorist information signs that inform, guide and warn drivers. We are challenged in the metropolitan areas to find adequate space for both regulatory signs and memorial signs.

In addition, Interstate 5 has already been designated by the legislature as both the Purple Heart Trail and the Korean War Veterans Memorial Highway. HB 3207 would add a third location on the same segment of highway. We recommend the legislature consider honoring the atomic veterans at one of two alternative locations. As an alternative to Interstate 5, we would suggest Interstate 82. Interstate 82 does not currently have any memorial designations and is the route leading to the Hanford nuclear site in Washington. The Santiam River rest area offers another alternative, which is located on Interstate 5 between Albany and Salem (within the segment of Interstate 5 mentioned in the bill).

Placing signs on Interstate 82 or in the rest area addresses any confusion around the existing designations on Interstate 5. The bill specifies that ODOT will not use public funds to install and maintain the signs, but instead may accept money from veterans groups for the effort.

SUMMARY

HB 3207 designates the portion of I-5 from Albany to Salem as Atomic Veterans Memorial Highway. Interstate 5 already has two designations—the Purple Heart Trail and the Korean War Veterans Memorial Highway. ODOT recommends placing the Atomic Veterans Memorial signs in the Santiam River rest area located eight miles north of Albany to avoid conflicts with other signs.