



Feb. 7, 2018

Chair Clem, Vice-Chairs McLain and Sprenger and members of the Committee,

The Board of Directors for the Bend Park and Recreation District opposes House Bill 4029 and believes it should not advance in the legislative process. This bill preempts our community conversation about how to best connect the southern portion of the Deschutes River Trail. A pedestrian bridge is one option, and we don't want that option taken away before we have had a chance to complete a community conversation with *all interests represented*.

As a Board, we met and discussed a local collaborative process at our Feb. 6 meeting. We plan to consider a resolution at our next meeting, Feb. 20, to reiterate our commitment to participate in a third-party facilitated conversation to reach agreement. We are open to proposed solutions and hope to develop consensus to find a solution that meets community needs. We want to participate in a data-driven conversation seeking a solution and provide our commitment to uphold and honor the outcome of this consensus building process.

Those who oppose a footbridge as a method to connect the Deschutes River Trail will be vital to the community conversation, but should not be allowed to circumvent the process by eliminating this option for all residents in Bend via legislation in Salem.

The constituency that we serve values trails and connectivity very highly. Voters approved a bond-funded project in 2012 to connect Tumalo and Sunriver via the Deschutes River Trail. In a spring 2017 survey, when asked what the District could do to improve parks and trails, 72% of respondents were supportive of completing a footbridge crossing on the south boundary of Bend. 14% were unsupportive. This connection across the river is also part of the Bend Park and Recreation District's Trail Plan, the City of Bend's Transportation System Plan, and the Deschutes River Trail Action Plan.

During the 20 years since the Oregon Scenic Waterway was established, the urban growth boundary has moved into this area, along with subdivisions and large homes that have been developed immediately adjacent to this area. Currently, residents in Southeast Bend do not have easy non-motorized access to public land right across the river to the west. The Board strongly believes that community discussion is the right way to facilitate finding a connection that meets the need for public access while providing environmental protection.

If facilitated discussion determines that a footbridge is the best method for connection, then the District will uphold its value of being an environmental steward. The District has a demonstrated record of thoughtfully designing and constructing trail projects that are attractive and protective of natural amenities.

A local collaborative process provides an opportunity to win on multiple fronts – ecological protection in perpetuity and arriving at a solution in a way that ensures broad community access and engagement.

This beloved reach of the river is a priority for the majority of residents and deserves to have a principled discussion about its future. We respectfully request that you oppose this bill.

Respectfully,

Nathan Hovekamp, Chair, Board of Directors, Bend Park and Recreation District  
Brady Fuller, Vice Chair  
Ted Schoenborn, Director  
Ellen Grover, Director  
Lauren Sprang, Director