

February 7, 2018

House Committee on Agriculture and Natural Resources
Representative Brian Clem, Chair
900 Court Street, NE
Salem, Oregon 97301

Re: HB 4029

Chair Clem, Vice-Chairs McClain and Springer, and members of the Committee:

Testimony in Opposition to HB 4029

My name is Ruth Williamson. I have worked closely with the Bend Park and Recreation District as an elected board member. Additionally, I have worked closely with the City of Bend, Deschutes National Forest, Deschutes County and other governmental and non-profit agencies in a variety of capacities spanning 21 years in Central Oregon. I have deep respect and confidence in the people and purpose of these entities, entrusted with managing our public resources—especially our precious natural landscape.

I strongly OPPOSE passage of proposed HB-4029 that would specifically prohibit the construction of a new pedestrian bridge that is proposed across the Deschutes River, located near the southwest corner of the Bend urban growth boundary (UGB).

I oppose this bill for many reasons--foremost are the following:

- **Bill Design:** This bill has been designed to pre-empt an established bridge review procedure that is outlined in the Oregon Wild and Scenic Rivers Act for this segment of the Deschutes River. The adopted river protection statute stipulates a legitimate and suitable process for consideration of a proposed bridge like the one contemplated near the Bend UGB boundary. The bill, as written, cloaks the primary objective (to stop bridge construction) in a shroud of broader issues designed to enlist the support of other well-meaning environmental protection organizations. Support of this bill precludes a bridge from any further discussion or study.

Not supporting the bill simply means that a decision on building the south UGB bridge has not been finalized and that it will get fair consideration through a local process that is already in place.

- **Bend Residents want a Bridge:** In 2012, the Bend Park and Recreation succeeded in gaining voter support of a \$29M Bond for construction of various park system improvements and amenities. While passage of a bond, clearly by itself, does not supersede Oregon law outright - **it does demonstrate community support for the continued development of the Deschutes River Trail System with a bridge.** The bond specifically called-out the bridge as a project – to be constructed at the subject

location – but would be outright prohibited by this proposed HB, if passed. Supporters of the park district bond have repeatedly cited “the bridge” as a reason why they cast their vote for the bond.

The point is; it has been well-demonstrated that there are a vast majority of Bend area residents who are expecting that a fair evaluation of the bridge construction will move forward – not just a select few that want to cast a ‘legal veto’ and kill the project without the benefit of any further consideration.

- Environment Sensitivity: The Bend Park District, as well as the city of Bend, have both demonstrated, in adopted plan (protection) policy and construction practice, a keen sensitivity and respect for Bend’s natural resources, especially the Deschutes River.

Every project either agency has developed has been constructed in a manner that suitably evaluates and mitigates/limits negative impacts to the affected natural environment. Specifically - case in point - are the construction of new bike-pedestrian bridges in recent years; the South Canyon Bridge, the First Street Rapids Bridge and the Colorado B-P Bridge (another bond project). These serve as excellent examples where bridge projects and connecting trails can be built with adequate environmental protection.

This bill would not permit any further detailed study, planning or engineering that could adequately address any issues or provide development of possible suitable environmental impact mitigation elements.

Thank you for your consideration. I urge you to oppose HB 4029.

Sincerely,

Ruth Williamson
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