



February 15, 2012

To: Members of the House Committee on Transportation and Economic Development

Rep. Cliff Bentz

Rep. Dave Hunt

Rep. Tobias Read

Rep. Patrick Sheehan

Rep. Shawn Lindsay

Rep. Nancy Nathanson

Rep. Jefferson Smith

Rep. Jim Weidner

Dear Representatives:

I am writing to encourage your **support of SB 1544** which would exempt certain parcels within the Central Oregon region from state transportation planning requirements. Specifically, there is a collection of vacant and adjacent parcels within the City of Redmond that have long been planned for employment land. While these properties are within Redmond's urban growth boundary and city limits, and in close proximity to water, sewer, power and transportation infrastructure, Oregon land use and transportation planning rules have rendered the properties virtually undevelopable for industrial or commercial uses.

Economic Development for Central Oregon (EDCO) has been the tri-county region's (Crook, Deschutes and Jefferson) lead economic development organization for the past 30 years. We have had success in recruiting new jobs and industry over that period, facilitating the relocation or expansion of more than 130 companies that created 3,400 new jobs in the past ten years alone. For the past decade, EDCO, the City of Redmond and Deschutes County have all desired to have these properties rezoned to respond to market demand.

Such large properties within legal reach of municipal services and urban land use boundaries are rare in our region and, in fact, across the state. In recent years, EDCO has worked with a number of corporate real estate professionals, site selectors and company leaders on relocation or expansion projects that could have located in our region had these properties been ready for development. If all were successful, these projects could have brought tens of millions of dollars to the state in new capital investment (property tax revenue), hundreds of well-paying jobs (personal income taxes) and successful companies (corporate income taxes) – all public sector revenue streams Oregon so badly needs to fill current budget gaps. Not having this property ready for industrial projects eliminated the region and state from further consideration. In short, we were not competitive with other places in the country given a 6-18 month timeline for a zone change and unspecified financial liability for transportation improvements.

Given our current economic and state budget situation, now is the time to eliminate the barrier for this specific group of properties, and thereby help satisfy a statewide deficit of large industrial-zoned parcels. Please take the necessary steps to move SB 1544 efficiently through the legislative process of this historic, first short interim session.

I regret that I am unable to attend today's committee meeting to present this testimony in person, but thank you for the opportunity to provide EDCO's perspective on this proposed legislation.

Respectfully,



Roger J. Lee
Executive Director

Cc: Senator Chris Telfer
Representative Jason Conger
Representative Gene Whisnant
Representative John Huffman
Representative Mike McLane

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