

The February 13, 2013 letter you have received from the St. Paul's City Council and Planning Commission clearly stated our opposition to HB 2696 The Coastal Parkway Toll Road. As the letter stated, agriculture is the heart, soul, history, and economy of St. Paul.

The Coastal Parkway toll road has five options any of which would run straight through the French Prairie on the outskirts of St. Paul in North Marion County. Though only about 400 acres of farmland would be taken out of production and overpasses on State and County roads would ensure traffic flow through the French Prairie, the Parkway would cut across some farms' land, dead end farm roads thereby blocking access, and eliminate not only some farm structures but farm homes. Such destruction would undeniably impact farming. Some farming families would have to end their agricultural heritage.

Oregon ranks number 1 in America in the following agricultural products:

- Caneberries
- Hazelnuts
- Rye, orchard and fescue grass seeds
- Crimson and red clover seeds
- Sugar beet seed
- Potted Florist azalias
- Peppermint
- Christmas trees
- Onions

Marion County ranks number 1 for all agricultural products in Oregon

The French Prairie grows all of the above agricultural products

Additional agricultural facts about the French Prairie and the Willamette Valley from Oregon State University's North Willamette Research and Extension Center include:

1. The Willamette Valley is one of the main areas of arable farmland in the Pacific Northwest.
2. The French Prairie within the Willamette Valley has a very high concentration of prime farmland.
3. The French Prairie is a truly unique agricultural resource because of its:
 - a. Outstanding soils that are some of the best in America
 - b. Mild climate with a long growing season and limited severe weather.
 - c. Mostly adequate water for irrigated crops.
 - d. Excellent transportation corridor and markets.
 - e. 150 year farming history and culture.

From a planning perspective, HB 2696 the Coastal Parkway Toll Road is highly questionable on two fronts.

1. The proposal lacks any transparency in its cost analysis and financial transactions because:
 - a. There is no model for revenue projections.
 - b. There are no projections for all construction components (bridges, over or under passes, and land acquisition).
 - c. Most importantly, there is no true cost of the loss of income from farm production.

Though if passed, the proposers would have to provide such data to ODOT. I would hope this Committee and the Legislature would want these facts before acting on HB 2696.

2. House Bill 2696 is not an emergency. The problem has taken 20 years to develop and it would take a minimum of 10 years to fund, permit and build the project, notwithstanding the developer's estimate of 2 years. Bypassing standard projections for implementation is ridiculous under these circumstances.

Lest anyone forgets....farming is an industry like any other.

The agricultural industry is at the heart and economy of Oregon. Do not pass HB 2696 and destroy this extremely valuable asset for St. Paul, Marion County and Oregon.

Marcie Garritt
Chair, St. Paul Planning Commission