

April 8, 2013

Good afternoon Chairman Read and Committee members. My name is Brenda Kirsch; I farm perennial ryegrass, filberts, grain, and row crops in St. Paul.

I am speaking today not only as a farmer but also as a board member of Marion County Farm Bureau, an organization with over 640 voting farmer members spread throughout county. And we are opposed HB 2696. This proposed route for the Coastal Parkway cuts through some of the most fertile land in the Willamette Valley. It is also my understanding that there are no significant property owners along the proposed route that are in favor of this project.

Oregon Farm Bureau and Marion County Farm Bureau are grassroots organizations that live by a Policy book that is reviewed annually in our democratic house of delegates. Our policy book states the following: *We are strongly opposed to entities using the eminent domain law to condemn privately owned property for the purpose of transferring ownership for private economic development.* Also in another section it reads, *Road development should encourage the continuance of farm use.*

This bypass would take hundreds of acres of prime Class I and II soils out of production. This is land that is actively being used for production Agriculture, one of the Oregon's leading industries. In addition it would make farming operations very difficult for the farmers who end up owning land on both sides of the proposed Parkway.

There is already an ODOT plan in place to improve traffic flow on 99W. Though the upgrades to 99W have taken longer than anticipated, and are expensive, it would not be wise at this late stage of the game to change strategies. To throw away all of the planning and work that has gone into improving 99W would be a waste of limited state resources. It would be better to see the existing plan for 99W upgrades through to completion. One of the most important reasons for planning is so that we as farmers can have some security in knowing that our land is there for us to farm, and not constantly under threat of eminent domain claims. We need to stick to the plan that is in place and keep our prime farmland protected.

It is simply not necessary, or right to take productive agricultural land from the farmers who own it, pay taxes on it, support their families with its bounty, provide jobs and economic stability to the community they live in, so that a for profit private interest group can build a toll road for their own economic gain. So please vote no on House Bill 2696.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

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