



EMANUEL
MEDICAL CENTER

2801 N. Gantenbein Ave.
Portland, OR 97227
www.legacyhealth.org
503.413.2200 phone
503.413.3003 fax

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Joint Committee on Interstate-5 Bridge Replacement Project:

As an organization committed to good health, Legacy Health understands that good health encompasses more than just health care. Because of that, we recognize that the I-5 Bridge Replacement Project is critical to the health of our region and support HB 2800.

To date, much of the public discussion of the I-5 Bridge Replacement Project has focused on cost, tolling and other funding issues. Legacy Health would like to make sure another issue is not lost in the discussion. That issue is safety. There are two safety issues we would like to emphasize.

Legacy Health is a major nonprofit health care provider in Oregon and Southwest Washington. With six medical centers throughout the Portland-Vancouver region, Legacy treats more than half a million outpatients annually and admits more than 56,000 people each year to our facilities. We also employ about 10,000 people.

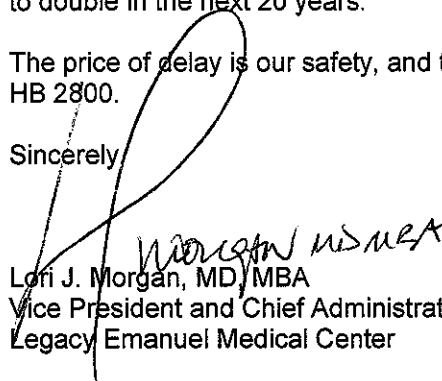
Our patients and our employees cross the I-5 bridge daily, at all hours, often in moments of crisis and emergency. The antiquated, substandard bridge we now live with compromises our ability to move patients, staff and equipment in a safe and efficient manner. A new I-5 bridge crossing will eliminate bridge lifts and provide a higher measure of travel predictability between our two states. This predictability is essential to us in our business of protecting peoples' health.

The second safety issue deals with traffic accidents. The number of accidents in the five-mile project area stands at about 400 per year - twice the rate of similar highways in Oregon and Washington. Sixty-six percent of crashes are rear-end collisions, and 14 percent are sideswipes. People are injured in more than one-third of these crashes. We see these accident victims regularly in our Emergency Departments on both sides of the river.

Lane additions and improvements at key exit and entrance points – "add/drop" lanes – will reduce accidents involving merging traffic. Widened shoulders will provide more room for stalled vehicles and for emergency vehicle traffic. Because crash rates increase three to four times during bridge lifts, the elimination of lifts will offer another safety improvement. Without a new bridge, crash rates are predicted to double in the next 20 years.

The price of delay is our safety, and that price is too high to ignore. Legacy Health asks you to support HB 2800.

Sincerely,


Lori J. Morgan, MD, MBA
Vice President and Chief Administrative Officer
Legacy Emanuel Medical Center