



OREGON CHAPTER SIERRA CLUB

1821 SE ANKENY ST • PORTLAND, OR 97214
PHONE (503) 238-0442 • FAX (503) 238-6281
OREGON.CHAPTER@SIERRACLUB.ORG
WWW.OREGON.SIERRACLUB.ORG

To: Members of the House Transportation and Economic Development Committee

From: Rhett Lawrence, Oregon Chapter Sierra Club

Date: February 12, 2014

RE: House Bill 4113

Chair Read and Members of the Committee: I am unable to attend this afternoon's committee in person, but on behalf of the more than 20,000 members and supporters of the Oregon Chapter of the Sierra Club, I did want to provide some written testimony in opposition to House Bill 4113 and the -3 amendments. In short, for a number of reasons, we ask you not to fund the highway expansion project across the Columbia River (CRC) in HB 4113 or in any other bill this session, at least in its current Oregon-only funding proposal.

For starters, we have environmental concerns about the CRC as currently proposed. Ongoing litigation will determine whether the proposed project violates the Endangered Species Act based on salmon habitat impacts. We also have air quality and environmental justice concerns with regard to several neighborhoods in North and Northeast Portland and believe the CRC could exacerbate existing problems.

Secondly, the CRC is a bi-state project. We oppose the Oregon Legislature going forward to fund the bi-state project without your colleagues in the Washington Legislature committing to sharing fully in the costs, risks, and liabilities. The Washington Legislature should be our partner on transportation issues across the corridor, particularly since 75% of the bridge users are Washingtonians. A vote in favor of going forward without their support betrays that partnership. Moreover, it does not bode well for our ability to effectively collect tolls from Washington drivers.

In addition, we do not believe Oregon should move forward on the CRC without a correlating full financial and risk commitment from Washington. The Oregon State Treasurer has repeatedly expressed concern about the current funding plan. ODOT says if it needs more money for the project, it can adjust tolls upward; ODOT also says if too much traffic diverts to I-205 to avoid tolls, it can adjust tolls downward. Our question is if we can statistically expect both of those things to happen, where will Oregon make up the shortfall?

In sum, the Oregon Sierra Club believes this project is simply fiscally irresponsible as it is currently proposed. We need Washington as a partner and we need a project that doesn't compromise our environment, our budget, or our values. Unfortunately, the CRC project as currently crafted is not worthy of Oregon's hard-earned reputation as an environmental leader and the Sierra Club opposes it. We urge this committee to vote No on HB 4113 and the -3 amendments. Thank you for considering our comments.