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February 11, 2015

Chair Alissa Keny-Guyer and Committee Members
House Committee on Human Services and Housing
State Capitol
Salem, OR

Re: HB 2620 – Inventory of ODOT Lands

Dear Chair Keny-Guyer and Committee Members:

1000 Friends of Oregon is a 40-year old, non-profit, statewide organization. We advocate for livable urban and rural communities, protecting family farms and forests, and conserving natural areas, largely through the implementation and improvement of Oregon's land use planning program. That land use program includes Goal 10, Housing, which requires that all communities plan their land and transportation systems to ensure the provision of housing for all, including affordable housing. Having the right land use and zoning tools in place is a necessary, but by no means sufficient, element in providing affordable housing in all communities. 1000 Friends has worked, since the beginning of our organization, for a robust implementation of Goal 10.

HB 2620 requires the Oregon Department of Transportation to inventory all its real property and report back to the Legislature on whether each parcel is "essential, useful or excessive," presumably to then see whether any of it is appropriate for residential use.

1000 Friends shares what we believe is the objective of HB 2620: to determine whether there is surplus state-owned land, in appropriate locations, that could be used to provide for affordable housing. However, we are unable to support the bill as currently drafted. The breadth of the bill's scope renders the inventory unwieldy and impractical, and possibly unnecessarily expensive.

We have spoken with Representative Reardon and the bill's proponents, and believe we can agree on amendments. We recommend that the bill narrow the inventory to ODOT lands that are inside urban growth boundaries, and focus on the goal of providing residential land for affordable housing purposes. The state of Oregon commits financial resources to the provision of affordable housing, through a variety of programs. Land already owned by the state, which if located in places that make sense for affordable residential development – that is, in towns and cities where employment and other opportunities exist – is a valuable and unique asset that can be sold to an affordable housing developer or held in a land trust for affordable housing.

We look forward to working with all those interested in this bill to craft amendments so we can support HB 2620. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Mary Kyle McCurdy

Mary Kyle McCurdy
Policy Director and Staff Attorney