

# Umatilla County

## Department of Land Use Planning

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DIRECTOR  
TAMRA MABBOTT

LAND USE  
PLANNING,  
ZONING AND  
PERMITTING

April 14, 2015

CODE  
ENFORCEMENT

Representative Brian Clem

Chair, House Committee on Rural Communities, Land Use and Water

SOLID WASTE  
COMMITTEE

RE: HB 2508 Testimony in support

SMOKE  
MANAGEMENT

Representative Clem and Members of the Committee:

GIS AND MAPPING

Thank you for hearing this important bill. The technical issues of siting and permitting transmission lines are complicated, as are the political forces on both sides. Your undertaking of this bill is a laudable action of sincere leadership.

RURAL  
ADDRESSING

LIAISON,  
NATURAL  
RESOURCES &  
ENVIRONMENT

For the record, my testimony is supported by each member of the Umatilla County Board of Commissioners. The Board has worked closely with the agricultural community for the past year to advocate on micro-siting of the Idaho Power Boardman to Hemingway Transmission line. While Idaho Power staff are sincere, county does not believe the farmer's interests will be given adequate attention unless the Oregon Legislature makes it a mandate. HB 2508 will provide the legal tools to make that happen.

Numerous organizations have shared with you the economic importance of agriculture in our region and state. Additionally, you are aware of the dire negative impacts the numerous transmission lines will likely have on agriculture in our region.

What I would like to impart with you today is my perspective as an Oregon planner. In my 24 years as a county planner I have watched the list of non-farm uses allowed in the Exclusive Farm Use Zone grow from a few to more than 50. Some of those non-farm uses have provided valuable options for landowners. Most non-farm uses have a rigorous list of standards that must be met in order to be permitted. Transmission lines are an exception; standards in place for permitting a transmission line are less than standards to permit a single non-farm dwelling. An applicant for a transmission line merely needs to show that the line must be sited on EFU land and that the applicant has considered siting within an existing right of way or co-locating with an existing transmission line.

The standards in place in statute and rule today place a premium on transmission lines, at the expense of natural resources, namely farm land, protection. HB 2508 would raise the standards for siting transmission lines commensurate with protection of high value farmland.

These are not easy issues to wrestle. Three years ago Umatilla County was highly criticized by energy developers and utilities for adopting rigorous standards for siting commercial wind energy facilities in the county. According to the renewable wind energy industry, the two-mile setback would guarantee no future any wind energy development in the county. The 2-mile setback and the watershed standards were just too onerous. By contrast, local residents came out in numbers and strongly supported the new code as a way to balance impacts to homes and a critical watershed. I am happy to report that recently, county has had pre-application with two developers who intend to submit applications for commercial wind projects. The industry will work with rigorous standards.

I share this example as it relates to the conundrum you are facing today. Many of the political forces you are hearing from were strongly opposed to our local siting standards. But there is proof that land use impacts can be balanced in a way that allows transmission siting and protection of farm and natural resources.

Thank you for your consideration and commitment, and for your courage in tackling these very challenging issues. Please do support HB 2508.

Cordially,



Tamra J. Mabbott  
Planning Director