

June 24, 2015

Senator Chris Edwards
Chair, Senate Committee on Sustainable Transportation
900 Court St. NE
Salem, Oregon 97301

RE: Testimony on HB 2281B, -B7 Amendments

Dear Chair Edwards and Members of the Committee,

Obsidian Renewables is an Oregon larger scale solar developer that I founded five years ago. Obsidian Renewables has developed 25 solar projects since then, including the three largest solar farms in the state. Our company motto is to “drive down the costs of solar,” so we build larger projects in the sunny part of the state.

Each of Oregon’s three largest projects received financial support from the Energy Trust of Oregon. The newest and largest project, Old Mill Solar in Bly, Klamath County, began construction earlier this month and should be delivering power to Pacific Power by November 2015.

Energy Trust support for larger scale solar in Oregon has been critical for the handful of projects that have been built.

I can’t say enough about the professional, well-informed staff at the Energy Trust and the fair-handed application of rules and procedures that are clear and reasonable in its stewardship of ratepayer monies.

For example, the Energy Trust understands that solar costs have declined substantially in the last three years. Accordingly, the ETO support for the Old Mill project was only one-tenth of its support for the similar Outback project built in 2012. And that reduction in support was fine with me.

Larger scale solar projects provide cost effective carbon reduction. Old Mill Solar is expected to produce 12,000 megawatt hours of electricity per year. Compared to power provided from coal, Old Mill will displace 9,100 tons of Carbon Dioxide per year, the equivalent of 4,000 tons of coal. This is also the equivalent of 19.7 million miles of passenger cars not fueled by gas. (That is 1,742 passenger vehicles.)

House Bill 2632, which passed House Energy Committee in March is in the Joint Ways and Means Committee awaiting action. It offers a fast and reliable way to spur additional solar farm development with substantial environmental and economic benefits.

Oregon should harvest as many lower-cost emissions savings as it can. We don't need to take from renewable energy to support electric cars. We can do both.

Thank you for your consideration of my comments.

David W. Brown
Senior Principal
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