



April 17, 2017

Honorable Members of the Oregon House of Representatives Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee,

As Chair of the Board of Directors for the Bend Park and Recreation District, I represent all members of the Board who unanimously oppose the proposed amendment to House Bill 2027. The amendment would prohibit the development of a possible bridge across the Deschutes River and more importantly it would pre-empt public engagement processes. This amendment would take decision-making away from the community around the Deschutes River and would end the decades of effort connecting the Deschutes River Trail.

The proposed amendment to House Bill 2027 does not strengthen the Oregon Scenic Waterway program. Instead it focuses on a local issue that is well-supported by the Bend community. Connecting the Deschutes River Trail to the U.S. Forest Service land has been envisioned by the community for decades, including in the Bend Park and Recreation District's Trail Plan, the City of Bend's Transportation Plan, and Bend Riverway Community Vision. I have been on the Board of Directors since 2003 and the Deschutes River Trail is unrivaled as a community resource and we are on the verge of completing the few remaining pieces.

Voters in Bend approved a bond-funded project in 2012 to connect the communities of Tumalo and Sunriver via the Deschutes River Trail, and a 2014 questionnaire of surrounding neighborhoods found that 88% of respondents supported the trail and bridge. The small minority who oppose a project should be part of the community conversation but not allowed to circumvent rulemaking. The District is committed to public engagement and will continue to seek community involvement and address concerns if a project is possible in the future. Our community should have a discussion about the best way to make this trail connection.

While there have been discussions about a possible bridge in this reach of the Deschutes River, there is currently not an application in with Oregon State Parks to build a bridge. A large committee of citizens from both sides of the Deschutes River came together in 2014 to consider the trail alignment and a possible bridge location. The District has a letter of intent signed by the primary property owner to acquire access through his property and to the location of a possible bridge. This proposed amendment would reject the community decisions to date and eliminate the possibilities of further involvement.

It would also open a new precedent for other communities to legislate outside the rulemaking process, a process that has worked since the 1990s.

This beloved reach of the river is a priority for the large majority of residents and deserves to have a principled discussion about its future.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ted Schoenborn", written over a horizontal line.

Ted Schoenborn, Chair, Board of Directors, Bend Park and Recreation District