

**From:** Christopher Cassard  
**To:** [Sen.MichaelDembrow@state.or.us](mailto:Sen.MichaelDembrow@state.or.us); [SENR Exhibits](#); [Sen Knopp](#); [Rep Whisnant](#)  
**Subject:** OPPOSITION to HB 2027  
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Senate Environment and Natural Resources Committee:

**I urge the Environment and Natural Resources Committee and the greater Senate to stop HB2027 and let public discussion of transportation infrastructure options continue among Central Oregonians.**

Promoting infrastructure that will support improved mobility and connectivity for community bicycle and pedestrian travel is an important goal of Bend and Deschutes County and all public agency transportation plans in Central Oregon.

One important element of ALL of these plans and goals is the development of a complete river trail system to support non automobile travel while being sensitive to the crown-jewel of the community; the Deschutes River. Over the past several years, significant steps have been made to complete the vision of a fully-connected trail system with the construction of many missing trail segments, construction of two new bike/pedestrian bridges and reconstruction of two existing bike/ped bridges. The trail system now only lacks a few elements that would provide a continuous trail system from the Sunriver area through Bend and on to Tumalo Park. It is important to note, that these past facility improvements have been constructed in an environmentally responsible manner with mitigation elements provided to eliminate or lesson possible trail/facility impacts. Completion of this trail system would be an amazing asset to the community that would provide a continuous 20+ mile trail network north and south of (and through) Bend for both local residents as well as visitors to Central Oregon.

The recent (2012) \$29M, voter approved, Bend Park and Recreation District bond measure will provide important funding to support making this complete trail system a reality. Supporters of that measure have repeatedly cited inclusion of a new south urban growth boundary (UGB) bridge was as an important reason why they voted for the bond measure.

However, House Bill HB 2027 has been introduced to the legislature and proposes prevention of the new south UGB bridge from being constructed. Of particular concern, within the last month is the manner that this (original) bill was significantly amended by Sunriver Representative Gene Whisnant to remove prior bill language and replace it with language expressly prohibiting construction of this south UGB bridge. This was done immediately prior to the House committee vote on the bill, with notice to Bend Parks & Recreation only on the final day and with no time for public input or comment. These events, as well as the extremely narrow special interest backing of the bill (including by campaign supporters) has been amply reported in recent Bend Bulletin editorials and articles.

I am enormously troubled by these developments for the following reasons:

1. In the manner and timing it has been presented, HB 2027 appears designed to limit current public input.
2. Local transportation plans have been developed over the years and favor construction of a fully-connected Deschutes River Trail system.
3. In their earlier approval of bond funding for the bridge, voters have effectively endorsed construction of the bridge.
4. If the Bulletin editorial on May 4<sup>th</sup> is accurate in its investigation, the genesis of the HB 2027 comes down to a handful of county residents, funded by a single resident.
5. It appears that the intended effect of HB 2027 is to deter or avoid continuing public process regarding the bridge as the TSP is implemented in the coming years.

As indicated by their earlier vote for funding, a strong majority of residents of Central Oregon recognize the significant amenity a fully-connected trail system will be, and support its continued development. This trail system and related pedestrian and cycling infrastructure will bring all of:

- Reduced auto traffic to one or the other ends of the trail systems
- Health and fitness aspects of multi-modal transportation
- Equitable access to transportation and recreational facilities for all residents
- Enhanced recreation opportunities, and
- Continued economic growth via recreational tourism

No doubt there is useful discussion to be had about the potential environmental and private property issues that surround the proposed bridge, and how this is impacted by the separate urban development plans near the bridge location. Fundamentally, I believe that these elements of public interest should continue to be debated through the sort of public process and consideration of alternatives that seems to be prematurely terminated by HB 2027. There should continue to be room for all opinions and effects of building the bridge to be aired, considered and debated among residents.

Again, I urge the Environment and Natural Resources Committee and the greater Senate to stop HB2027 and let public discussion of transportation infrastructure continue.

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