

May 6<sup>th</sup>, 2017

Esteemed Oregon Senators:

The Bend Paddle Trail Alliance urges you to vote “No!” against the misguided House Bill 2027. This bill seeks to explicitly prohibit construction of a pedestrian footbridge over the Deschutes River at the edge of Bend’s urban growth boundary. Building such a bridge would create the missing link between two currently existing popular trails. Moreover, such a bridge will enable Bend’s population east of the river to easily access and enjoy the many Deschutes National Forest trails and recreation opportunities without which we must instead drive through town, needlessly exacerbating Bend’s growing traffic problems, just to enjoy a walk along our beautiful river. The bridge has been the key missing link in our community vision of a fully connected trail along the Deschutes River from Sun River to Bend, and is overwhelmingly supported by residents of Central Oregon.

Although a footbridge is a seemingly small project, Bend Parks and Recreation District has diligently invested several years planning, coordinating carefully with regulatory permit agencies, and gathering broad public review of the project. In contrast, this hastily written HB 2027 legislation was put forth with zero public review, and serves only a handful of homeowners who presumably prefer no improvements to public access to public land near their private property. Even HB 2027’s primary author, Oregon Representative Gene Whisnant now admits to the Bend Bulletin “... I regret that the bill did not have time for more vetting. ...”

Bend Paddle Trail Alliance, is a local all-volunteer non-profit dedicated to enhancing recreational enjoyment of the Deschutes River for pedestrians, canoeists, and whitewater paddlers. We have built innovative and strong private/public partnerships with BPRD and we have raised and donated more than \$1.25M for public access and recreation along the Deschutes. We are passionate advocates for our treasured river and for the sustainable public enjoyment of it.

We urge you to vote “No!” on house bill 2027.

Our local paper has written several editorials opposing HB 2027 that include many additional details:

- [Weigh in on Whisnant’s bill on the footbridge](#)
- [Gene Whisnant’s give-away to riverfront property owners harms Bend trail users](#)
- [The ‘enviro’ group behind Whisnant’s footbridge fight](#)
- [Local lawmaker tries to kill Deschutes trail connection](#)

Thanks for your public service.

Regards,

Board Members of the Bend Paddle Trail Alliance.