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May 10, 2017

Senate Committee on Environment and Natural Resources

Senator Michael Dembrow, Chair

Senator Alan Olsen, Vice-Chair

Members Herman Baertschiger, Floyd Prozanski and Arnie Roblan

900 Court St NE

Salem, OR, 97301

Dear members of the Oregon Senate Committee on Environment and Natural Resources,

Bend 2030's board of directors opposes House Bill 2027 prohibiting the development of a bridge across the Deschutes River within certain segments of the Deschutes Scenic Waterway. The prohibition of this bridge runs counter to the strongly voiced opinions of residents in our area who highly value a connected trail system. It also circumvents our citizenry's ability to make decisions at the local level—something our Central Oregon community values highly.

We reach out to you today as the Bend area's primary advocate for the involvement of diverse stakeholders and the general public in civic decision-making. In 2005, our organization worked with one in seven Bend residents to craft a Vision for Bend in the year 2030. This effort remains one of the largest civic engagement projects ever conducted in the Central Oregon region. Our board believes that decision-making should occur in full sunlight with all views represented—the development of this bill was conducted without even the primary stakeholders engaged, let alone the broader community.

The Bend 2030 role in these conversations is a little like strategic planning on a community-wide basis. We ask, "What does our community collectively want to accomplish?" One of the most resounding answers we continue to hear—and was recently reflected in our local Parks district comprehensive planning survey—is that Bend-area citizens support the completion of a multimodal, interconnected trail system. This sentiment is reflected well in the original Bend 2030 Vision. Please refer to page 15 of the Vision, which you can find at our website, [bend2030.org](http://bend2030.org).

*Bend 2030 Vision: A Quality Environment, Section 3.11—Interconnected Trail System*

*Bend has completed a citywide, fully inter-connected 'urban trails' system that links walkers, runners and bicyclists to local parks and recreation facilities, open spaces, and other destinations through sidewalks, paths, water trails, and greenbelt corridors. This system provides public recreational access throughout the city while protecting the environment. Bend has regionally coordinated trail systems that connect cities and provide access to adjoining city, state and federal lands.*

This strongly held community desire for a regional, interconnected trail system linking to recreational lands is also upheld again and again and again in the Oregon State Parks Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan, or SCORP. Of the top 10 activity types by user in our region, 8 of the 10 activities listed are related to an interconnected trail system as would be provided by the potential Deschutes River Trail bridge House Bill 2027 seeks to quash. At a state level, 61 percent of the Oregon population demonstrates support for a local trail system through their actual behaviors—walking on local trails and paths is the second most popular recreational activity use for Oregon residents.

It's clear that Oregonians, and Central Oregonians in particular, highly value the kinds of complete trail systems that footbridges over the Deschutes River could bring to our community. But the greatest issue here is the attempt to circumvent community dialogue about such a bridge. This is a decision that deserves full, transparent vetting.

Our board strongly encourages your team to return this question to the fully-fledged decision-making processes that already exist in Deschutes County, and eliminate the chance that a hastily-made state-level decision could run deeply counter to broadly-held public sentiment at the local level.

Thank you so much for your consideration and your service,

Jillian Taylor  
Chair, Bend 2030