

Ted Schoenborn
Chair, Board of Directors
Bend Park and Recreation District
HB2027A - Testimony
May 10, 2017

Chair Dembrow and Members of the Senate Committee on Environment and Natural Resources, I am Ted Schoenborn, chair of the Bend Park and Recreation District Board of Directors. I've had the pleasure to serve on this board since 2003.

In this time the District has developed miles of trails used for recreation and transportation in Bend. The Deschutes River Trail is an amazing example of how public access can transform appreciation for a waterway. From the not-so-distant past days when the Deschutes River was a logging corridor to now when 130,000 people river recreate each summer, the river is the hub of the community.

HB 2027-A would mean the end of the Deschutes River Trail and I am here today to ask you to oppose it. This special interest legislation doesn't belong in Salem. The swift introduction and passage in the House was a surprise and should not preempt a public process in Bend.

The other members of the Board and I feel strongly about the need for public process and discussion about the possible benefits and impacts that a footbridge would have on the south boundary of Bend. In fact, our Board considered a legislative amendment to site a bridge at a particular location and decided against it. It would preclude the public process like this legislation is attempting to do and we are adamantly against this.

The Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) data shows soft surface trails are highest priority statewide. As a current member of the SCORP committee, we should all work together to be responsive to the public request for trails. Bend Park and Recreation District has made its trail system a priority and as recently as a month ago it was reiterated again.

A statistically valid survey from residents across Bend and found that 72% of residents support a bridge and trail – this includes a broad section of the community – north to south and east to west.

And before the opposition to a footbridge became a NIMBY issue, we sent out a questionnaire in 2014 to neighbors on both sides of the river. Response found that 88% of residents indicated they would use a trail and bridge if built.

Trails are not meant to be a treadmill – exercise without going anywhere. They are intended to serve connectivity. Transportation difficulties are significant as Bend swells with residents and a steady stream of visitors.

In 2012 voters approved a bond measure that included the Deschutes River Trail with connection from Sunriver to Tumalo State Park. The bond measure information specifically talked about a footbridge and

trail development to connect both sides of the Deschutes River Trail and to US Forest Service trails. I brought copies of the bond information sent to every household in the District.

Our community should have a discussion about the best way to meet the community wide interests with trail access and connections.

Thank you. I would be happy to answer questions.