

May 11, 2017

Joint Committee on Ways and Means
Subcommittee on Capital Construction

Re: SB 5505 – Clackamas County Courthouse Replacement Project

Dear Co-Chair Girod, Co-Chair Holvey, and Members of the Subcommittee:

We urge your support for the \$1.25 million bond funding request for planning of the Clackamas County Courthouse replacement project. The bond authorization for the 2017-2019 biennium will enable Clackamas County to continue the momentum on the project and allow the County to return to the Legislature in 2019 and 2021 with a final design and construction requests.

Built in 1936, the Clackamas County Courthouse is located in downtown Oregon City and currently serves hundreds, and sometimes thousands, of residents each day. It was originally constructed to house one courtroom but has been modified over time to accommodate 10 additional courtrooms and a total of 11 judges. After 81 years of operation, the building suffers from significant capacity, safety, seismic, and ADA challenges. In particular, the demands of our increasing population have outgrown our facility's ability to adequately hold hearings in a timely manner and conduct courtroom business in a way that is safe for jurors, judges, and the public.

Not only is the Clackamas County Courthouse already undersized and over-utilized, the population in Clackamas County is expected to grow by 53% by the year 2050. The recommended number of courtrooms to serve that anticipated population increase is between 18 and 26. This level of growth cannot be accommodated in the current facility due to seismic concerns and space constraints along Main Street in Oregon City.

The following examples are realities for Clackamas County, and showcase the delayed justice, economic loss, and safety concerns stemming from the courthouse's inadequacy.

- Currently, a mother in need of pre-trial help with support for herself and her children must wait 116 days for a hearing. In 2012, the wait was 63 days.
- Complex civil litigation trials, which typically last four to six weeks, are continually being scheduled one-year out. Most cases are large condominium projects where often hundreds of owners find themselves unable to sell their property until the case is resolved.

- Thousands of criminal cases are heard at the County Courthouse each year. Inadequate space increases life-safety risks for judges, jurors, and victims.

Work is currently underway to design a new, larger courthouse that will be located on the County's existing Red Soils campus in Oregon City. Clackamas County has already invested millions of dollars in preparing for the courthouse relocation, including purchasing the land, having an approved Master Plan, and pre-installing utilities. In addition, the future site of the courthouse is in close proximity to other complimentary services such as the County Jail, Mediation Services, Juvenile Services, and the Family Justice Center. Further, the courthouse will co-locate the State Department of Human Services, which will provide family services and a daytime safe space for children involved in justice system activity.

The funding we hope to secure in the 2017-19 biennium from the Oregon Courthouse Capital Construction and Improvement Fund is essential to Clackamas County and its nearly 400,000 residents who rely on dependable public safety services. We look forward to working with the state to ensure our residents and all Oregonians have safe, unhindered, and timely access to public safety services in Clackamas County.

Please contact Chris Lyons at clyons@clackamas.us for more information.

Sincerely,



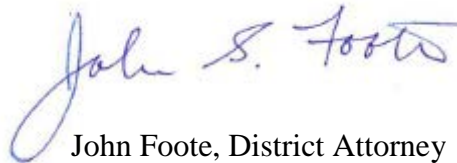
Jim Bernard, Chair
On behalf of the Clackamas County
Board of Commissioners



Robert D. Herndon, Presiding Judge
Clackamas County Circuit Court



Craig Roberts, Sheriff
Clackamas County



John Foote, District Attorney
Clackamas County