

TESTIMONY FOR TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE, JUNE 6, 2017

I'm Susan Sokol Blosser, cofounder of Sokol Blosser Winery in Dayton. I'm testifying as a small business owner and as someone who has seen how Yamhill County vineyards and wineries have been instrumental in putting Oregon on the international wine map. When Bill Blosser and I bought our first piece of vineyard land in 1970, we had no idea we would be helping create a new industry that would transform Yamhill County. But the wine industry has made my basically poor, rural county the center of an Oregon industry which now pumps over \$3 billion into the Oregon economy each year.

I'm also speaking for Ken Wright of Ken Wright Cellars, one of Oregon's iconic winemakers, who is on winery business in Chicago today. (I want to note that Ken is a registered Republican and I am a registered Democrat and while we may have issues of disagreement, transportation is one on which we are of one mind.) Ken serves on the Mid-Willamette Area Commission on Transportation, or MWACT, which has identified the Newberg-Dundee Bypass as one of its highest priorities. I understand this committee has received a copy of a letter from MWACT to the Oregon Transportation Committee asking that the OTC accelerate final design and engineering for Phase 2 of the Bypass.

As value-added agriculture, the wine industry has not only created jobs locally, it has also become a major tourism destination, and the focus of international attention. For example, the International Terroir (not terror) Conference was held, for the first time in North America, at Linfield College in 2016. Both the national Society of Wine Educators and the Masters of Wine conferences will be held in Oregon in 2017. A major wine publication named the Willamette Valley their Wine Region of the Year in 2016.

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This leads me to the importance of transportation. Ken Wright and I want to make the following points:

- 1 ● Wineries need good surface transportation not only to enable timely delivery of grapes during harvest, but to ship finished wine to national markets. Almost 60% of wine produced in Oregon is sold out of state, so transportation is critical.
- 2 ● Because tourism and onsite sales of wine are critical aspects of local winery income, wineries are dependent on surface transportation. The bottleneck on the Highway 99W corridor annoys tourists to the point that they don't stop but just try to get through. Talking to guests who come to our winery has made us realize that the highway congestion is costing us business.
- 3 ● A number of Yamhill County wineries in the Newberg-Dundee area want to expand operations, creating more jobs, but are reluctant to do so unless the congestion on the OR 99W corridor is reduced or eliminated.
- 4 ● The Newberg-Dundee Bypass project is in the final completion of Phase One. We are in a catch-22 with the future. In order to secure Federal grant funds for construction of Phase 2, we must be "shovel ready," but in order to be shovel ready, we need state funds for design and engineering work.
- 5 ● I applaud this committee for your great work in assembling such an impressive transportation package and appreciate your including funding for the Newberg-Dundee Bypass. As the committee refines and finalizes the package, please ensure that there is adequate funding from the state, and financing tools available, for the local Bypass partners to go after federal funds and work with the state to move forward on the next Phase.

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- 6 ● So many private and elected citizens have given up to decades of their lives in an effort to see this project to its fruition. It is incumbent on us to make sure the project is completed in a way that truly solves the traffic issues before us.
- 7 ● Funding the last two stages would be a major economic boost for a rural county outside the Metro area. Job creation, economic development, congestion relief, safety improvements, community livability, greenhouse gas emission reduction, freight traffic improvement, and seismic resiliency will only be achieved by completing the entire project. I ask you to invest in Oregon's future by helping us finish the project which is off to a great start.