



From: Central Oregon Trail Alliance
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February 6, 2018

To: House Committee on Agriculture and National Resources
Representative Brian Clem, Chair
900 Court Street, NE
Salem, Oregon 97301

Subject: Opposition to House Bill 4029/Support for Local Trail Planning

Chair Clem, Vice-Chairs McLain and Sprenger and members of the Committee:

We are writing to express our strong opposition to Sections 1 and 2 of House Bill 4029 that specifically prohibits a potential pedestrian/bicycle bridge across the Deschutes River south of Bend and takes trail planning away from local entities.

We are particularly concerned that this measure removes a very viable option for a solution to connecting the Deschutes River Trail from Bend to Sunriver and providing a connection for residents from the east side of Bend with existing recreational trails on the west side of the river.

We have several reasons for wanting a pedestrian bridge across the river, as do many other organizations representing recreational and other interests. COTA believes in "ride to ride" options connecting urban trails to single track trails on public lands such as USFS. We believe such connections for hikers, trail runners and mountain bikers provides for a better recreation experience, leaving the car in the driveway. Likewise, we also believe that not having to drive to a trailhead for recreation reduces carbon emissions and reduces overall traffic on the already busy Cascade Lakes Highway.

It is important to note that Bend voters approved a Parks and Recreation Bond measure in which a connection (bridge) from east to west was a keystone component. Many conservation groups could be counted amongst the bond's most ardent supporters.

We are aware that there are other organizations and individuals that have concerns over protecting the natural beauty and environmental stability of the river. We share those concerns

and support any and all efforts to protect riparian habitat, water quality and other conservation values. We believe that those values can be protected and enhanced while also providing for sustainable recreation corridors. In fact, we believe that recreation is a great long term conservation tool. Getting people to connect with and have great recreation experiences on landscapes will in turn give them an important connection to those lands and thus a long term desire to protect them.

We understand that some are opposed to a bridge spanning a State Scenic Waterway, but we would also point out that there is a bridge upstream of Benham Falls connecting to the Sunriver community. That bridge provides for great connectivity and positive experiences for a wide range of human powered recreationalists. The connection of trails and that bridge encourages active and exercise based transportation as an alternative to cars. This is much more environmentally sustainable and provides for a better recreation experience. Alternative human powered recreation access to USFS lands reduces traffic, helps reduce impacts at overcrowded FS parking areas and trailheads, and promotes a healthy lifestyle while protecting the environment with no carbon emissions.

With the wide range of stakeholders interested in this issue and the varied perspectives they represent, we feel strongly that the decision making process is best served by staying at the local level. It is particularly objectionable that one stakeholder in particular (Oregon Wild) has proposed to remove the option of a collaborative process and input from other local stakeholders, including others in the conservation community who wish to participate in a local process.

We urge you to remove Sections 1 and 2 from this bill and offer your support for a collaborative approach that fairly considers all of the issues and concerns regarding this initiative and listens to a wider range of stakeholders and individuals.

We cannot predict the outcome of a collaborative effort such as we endorse but we trust the right solution will be found and the process will enhance future cooperation between stakeholders.

Thank you for your consideration.

Bruce A Schroeder
Chair, Central Oregon Trail Alliance

COTA is a trail stewardship and mountain bike advocacy organization based in Bend with Chapters in Sisters, Redmond, and Crook County. We have over 1000 members and we represent many thousands more locally and throughout Oregon. Additionally, we are part of the Oregon Mountain Bike Coalition, which is a state-wide organization comprised of many local mountain bike advocacy organizations throughout the state.