

February 6, 2018

House Committee on Agriculture and Natural Resources

Representative Brian Clem, Chair

900 Court Street, NE

Salem, Oregon 97301

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

I am writing about HB 4029, specifically Section 1 that calls for a ban on bridges crossing the Deschutes River from the COID intake to a location upriver of Sunriver. There are many reasons why I oppose this bill. I will address the immediate concerns I have as they relate to a current proposed crossing of the river to allow pedestrian and bicycle access from the south side of Bend to the west side USFS trail system.

1. This ban would conflict with the Bend Transportation System Plan, the Deschutes County Greenway Study, and the Bend Parks and Recreation District's Trail Plan. These plans have been in place for 2 decades. Furthermore, the Deschutes National Forest Alternative Transportation Plan supports the bridge if environmental concerns are addressed.
2. Currently residents from south side of Bend make a 11 – 16 mile roundtrip drive or bicycle ride to reach the USFS Rimrock Trails trailhead. They go further if they want to access other river access points. Taking this route by car which many of them do, especially those with dogs, involves increasing greenhouse gases from vehicle emissions. This results in an environmental impact far greater than building a bridge.
3. All scenic waterways that I know of have bridges across them and it in no way detracts from the visual experience or wildlife habitat. Bridges provide corridors for wildlife. The Deschutes Scenic River currently has a pedestrian bridge just upstream of Benham Falls and it enhances the user experience and gives access from Sunriver to USFS trails. A good example of other pedestrian bridges across scenic rivers to access trails would be the bridges across the Umqua Scenic River, McKenzie River, Metolius River (all national scenic rivers) further south of Bend.
4. Data collected in recent years shows broad community support for a bridge and trail connection across the Deschutes. In a spring survey conducted in 2017, 72% of respondents were supportive of completing a footbridge across the river linking south to west trail systems, only 14% were unsupportive.

The proponents of this bill, Oregon Wild and a nearby property owner who has been the “loudest” opponent, claim a bridge would be detrimental to the environment and wildlife, especially migration patterns. This is ludicrous. There are many examples of wildlife currently using trails and bridges as migration pathways. (Bridge spans have been created over freeways for this purpose). Anyone

living along the river can tell you that the migration patterns changed drastically when a housing development began along that section. Coincidentally the person who sold the land to developers is the “loudest” above mentioned opponent of the bridge and he has also sold a new plot of land along the river that is currently under development. Those developments have a much larger impact on wildlife than a pedestrian bridge. I believe “the pot is calling the kettle black” in this instance. It’s a classic case of NIMBYISM – NOT IN MY BACKYARD. ( I don’t want other community members coming near my property because I prefer to have my privacy.)

For the most part Bend is a community where most community members look out for the interests of all. I live on the west side of the river at Seventh Mountain Resort and have access to the Deschutes River Trail just below my condo. Seventh Mountain Resort owns the land the trail passes through but has given an easement for the trail because it was the right thing to do. Our resort has its own system of trails that the public is welcome to use them because we are good community players. I support a bridge, not because it grants me easier access, but because it is the right thing to do for this community that I love.

With all due respect, I feel that this issue should be resolved at a local level by the stakeholders that are most affected and local governmental agencies and not by the State Legislature. I urge you to remove Section 1 from HB 4029.

Thank you for your consideration of my comments.

Sincerely,

Joanne keen

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