

**Ted Schoenborn  
Board of Directors  
Bend Park and Recreation District  
HB4029 - Testimony  
February 8, 2018**

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Chair Clem and Members of the House Committee on Agriculture and Natural Resources, I am Ted Schoenborn, a member of the Bend Park and Recreation District Board of Directors. I've had the honor 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 almost quarter million people river recreate each summer, the river is the hub of the community.

HB 4029 would mean the abrupt stoppage to a connectivity plan for 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 proposed legislation should not pre-empt a local process in Bend. Trails serve connectivity as well as recreation. Transportation difficulties are significant as Bend swells with residents and a steady stream of visitors. Trails must be an important element in our transportation planning and effective planning requires local input. Our community needs a comprehensive discussion about the best way to meet the community wide interests with trail access and connections.

Since the conclusion of the 2017 Legislative Session, the District has taken no action to pursue a bike/ped bridge at or near the location in question. The District felt that after such a contentious session, the best course of action would be to take some time before re-evaluating the matter and considering possible next steps. Once the District received word of HB 4029, we began discussions in earnest again.

As a Board, my colleagues and I discussed a local collaborative process at our Feb. 6 meeting. We plan to consider a resolution at our next meeting, Feb. 20, to reiterate our commitment to participate in a third-party facilitated conversation to reach agreement. We are open to proposed solutions and hope to develop a consensus that meets community needs including respecting the environment. We want to participate in a data-driven conversation seeking a solution and a commitment to uphold and honor the outcome.

Conservation and recreation need not be exclusive – and they are both perspectives the Park and Recreation District values and upholds. A pedestrian bridge connecting the Deschutes River Trail would connect a rapidly growing neighborhood to an intensive recreation area on federal land that serves as an off-leash area and hiking trails that has well-used and substantially degraded the riverbanks.

Local involvement is needed to arrive at the best solution to improve this section of the Deschutes River. A community discussion that engages all interests to arrive at the best decision must continue and be expanded.

The other members of the Board and I feel strongly about the need for local process and discussion about the possible benefits and impacts that a footbridge would have on the south boundary of Bend. This legislation would preclude the local process and we are adamantly against this.

The Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) data shows soft surface trails are the highest priority statewide. As a current member of the SCORP committee, I understand that we should all work together to be responsive to the public request for trails.

Bend Park and Recreation District's most recent survey for our Comprehensive Plan revision reaffirms our trail system is a priority. And before the opposition to a footbridge sought legislative action, we sent out a questionnaire in 2014 to neighbors on both sides of the river. That response found that 88% of residents indicated they would use a trail and bridge if built. A later statistically valid survey found 72% support citywide.

Our community should identify the best way to make this trail connection. We are committed to this value and welcome the opportunity to learn more directly from those who differ in their viewpoints about this access. If this bill passes, it will preempt that discussion and community involvement.

Thank you. I would be happy to answer questions.