

February 5, 2018

House Committee on Agriculture and National Resources

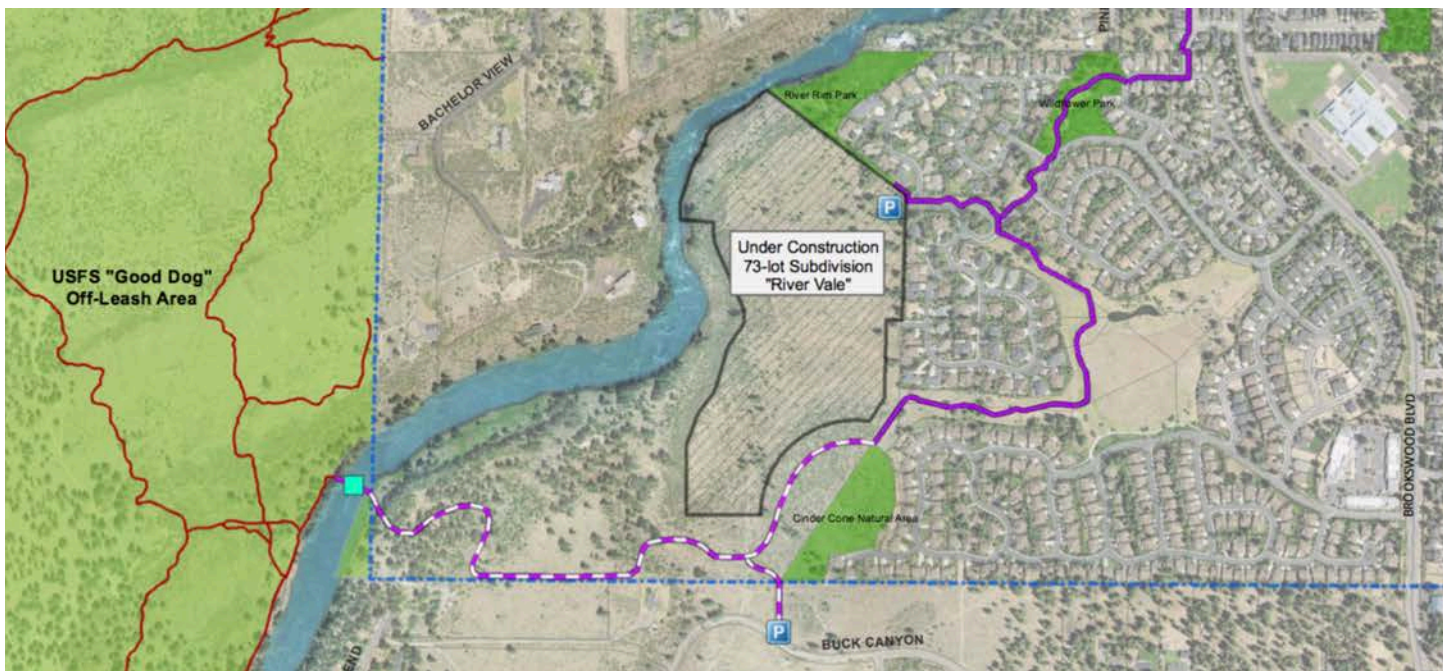
To Chair Clem, Vice-Chairs McLain and Sprenger and Members of the Committee:

I am writing regarding House Bill 4029 which would ban all bridges crossing the Deschutes River from the Central Oregon Irrigation District Intake to upriver of Sunriver. I am one of the majority of Bend residents who desires a simple pedestrian bridge crossing the Deschutes River. This bridge would provide a direct connection for residents living east side of the Deschutes River to walk or bicycle to the Deschutes National Forest on the west side.



*Example of current footbridge crossing Deschutes River, the South Canyon Footbridge of Deschutes River Trail adjacent to Farewell Bend Park, south of Healy Bridge, Bend.*

Currently east Bend residents drive an average 11-12 mile round trip over an increasingly congested Healy Bridge to reach the Deschutes National Forest. The pedestrian bridge would provide a gasoline free connection to Rimrock (aka Good Dog) trailhead parking, Deschutes River Trail recreation sites and other popular destinations within the National Forest.

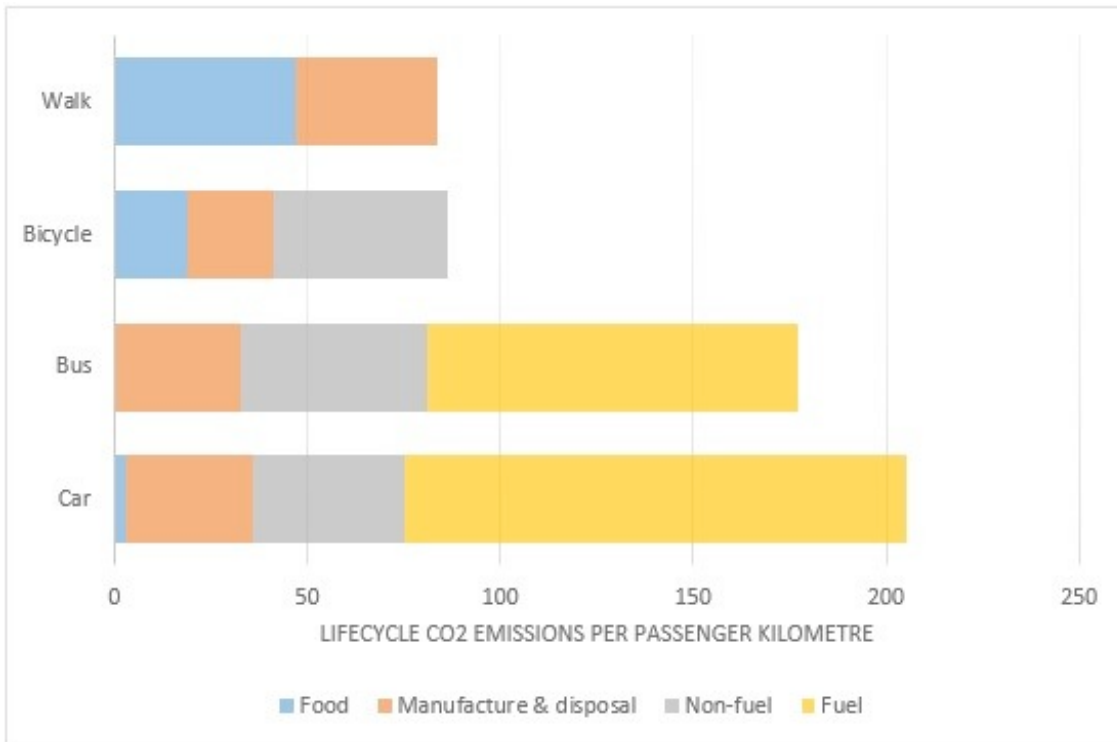


*Dashed purple line illustrates proposed connection of east side of Bend to the Deschutes National Forest. Blue square is the proposed bridge site.*



As a member of Bend Bikes, I support initiatives for sensible infrastructure for cyclists and pedestrians which encourage active transportation. In fact, active transportation emits significantly less carbon per mile (0.075 pounds/ mile) compared to the average car (1 pound/mile).

The Oregon Department of Energy acknowledges that: “Transportation - by air, water, rail or road - is one of the largest contributors of greenhouse gas emissions. At ODOE, our work focuses on ... implementing policies that decrease carbon emissions,” Active transportation provides one such solution. Building the pedestrian bridge would be in line with ODOE’s work to implement policies to decrease carbon emissions which contribute to climate change.



Oregon Wild of which I am a member, argues that to build a bridge is a threat to the river and wildlife. An editorial in the Bend Bulletin, written by Erik Fernandez of Oregon Wild implies that the portion of river where the bridge will cross is unspoiled wilderness. Nothing is further from the truth.

Houses line almost every portion of the river’s edge that is not part of national forest. In fact, large houses are within sightline of the proposed bridge. As one travels south on the Deschutes River Trail, many more structures are easily visible on the other side.



*First photo illustrates the large houses abutting boundary of National Forreast west side of Deschutes River, altering the landscape for Forest visitors. Second and third photo demonstrate homes along the Deschutes River viewed from the Deschutes River Trail.*

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One could argue that the sight of houses spoil the wilderness experience, yet that would be nonsense. This portion of the the Deschutes River is, like it or not, part of an expanding urban landscape, one that is growing every day.



*Large new development southeast Bend between Deschutes River and Cinder Cone Natural Area,  
Which is more disruptive to wildlife? Development or a pedestrian bridge?*

Due to the fact that the west side Bend abuts the Deschutes National Forest, development west of the Deschutes River will eventually reach the saturation point. More residences will be built on east side of Bend. Without an alternative, more east Bend residents will have to drive to reach the Rimrock and other trailheads. One can conclude that this will lead to more carbon emissions.

The sensible environmental choice is obvious. Permit Bend to provide an active transportation alternative to driving to the National Forest. In keeping with good environmental stewardship, I expect Bend Park and Recreation District will actively work with experts to ensure minimal impact to wildlife, riparian area, and river flow.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,  
Kelly Von Ruden  
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