

This testimony is submitted in opposition to HB 2974.

I am a fifth generation resident of Salem and the mid Willamette Valley. My family homesteaded in Yamhill County and farmed in Mission Bottom. I am a member of One Thousand Friends of Oregon and I am secretary to the Friends of Marion County.

I have followed the debate over the construction of a third bridge over the Willamette to better connect the Polk and Marion County sides of the river and to serve the needs of Polk County residents who work on the east side of the river. Through a long and politically contentious process the third bridge was rejected, with much of the opinion directed at the need to retrofit the existing bridges to meet the seismic demands a major quake would cause.

The major backing for the third bridge comes from groups who seek to gain from the zoning changes that a bridge would provide. For four decades I have followed the evolution of Oregon's land use laws. I am principally concerned that this bill would effectively destroy the agricultural heart of the Willamette Valley along the river where any potential series of bridges might be built.

Potential bridges would cut through the agricultural heart of the valley. A bridge, for example, at Wheatland Ferry would serve only the purposes of changing the land from farming to industrial, and eventually residential. A bridge there would pose the same problems as a third bridge in Salem - one would cross the bridge and then have to turn either north or south (unless a road were driven through to 99W).

Second, this bill effectively substitutes the perceived need for the third bridge by replacing commuting by local residents of the two counties with a transportation corridor designed to serve business interests. This is disingenuous.

Third, the selection of people who would oversee the location of future bridges disproportionately represent interests other than the majority of the affected populations.

Fourth, the funding of any development would come primarily from property taxes paid by residents who have no direct interest in any such development. As a corollary, property taxes are one of the least progressive forms of generating taxable revenue. This bill promotes development that would benefit groups who would not have to pay for the cost and would effectively undermine all of the work of nearly three generations of Oregonians who have worked to create a land use system that is admired around the nation.

If there is a need to move traffic from I-5 through the heart of the valley, an alternative might well include a major road project from approximately where I-205 splits off from I-5, and which would connect with 99W and Highway 18. Highway 34 offers similar opportunities for routing traffic off of I-5 toward the west to the coast.

In conclusion, this bill mutates beyond recognition the motives for a third Salem bridge, and in the process puts the cost burden on a population that would not benefit, whose construction they would be required to finance, while at the same time seeing the undermining of the central Willamette Valley's agricultural heartland.

I am an Oregonian, and I do not want to see what makes Oregon great destroyed in the interest of

groups who have no interest in Oregon's land use system.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in green ink that reads "Richard van Pelt". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looped initial 'R' and a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Richard van Pelt  
4492 Hayesville DR NE  
Salem, Oregon 97305