

Dear Chair Holvey and members of the House Rules Committee:

I am writing to urge you **not** to move HB 2974 forward. For the past several years I was actively involved in opposing another bridge through Salem, across the Willamette River. That plan was finally, wisely defeated by a Salem City Council that was elected by No Third Bridge constituents. For many of the same reasons, another bridge in this area is a bad idea.

- A Bridge District will tax property owners in 4 counties most of whom will never use the bridge during the hours of congestion. Adding taxes will negatively impact other services that rely on property taxes, including police, fire and the Salem Area Mass Transit District.
- We need to invest in better, more frequent and cleaner mass transit to move people, rather than constructing new bridges and highways. Studies have shown over and over again that building new highways does not decrease congestion - they encourage more driving. A bus can replace 30-40 cars at much less impact to the transportation infrastructure and the environment.
- If tolling is also required to pay for the bridge, drivers will travel another route to avoid the cost which means all other neighboring bridges will also need to be tolled. In fact, studies for the Third Bridge in Salem concluded that congestion pricing (tolling) on the existing bridges would reduce traffic so much that another bridge would not be justified. Tolling the existing bridges in Salem should be at the top of the list of ways to reduce congestion there.
- The project is estimated to cost more than \$400 MM and would consume all local transportation dollars for many years. That does not even include the additional maintenance costs.
- The only locations proposed for a new bridge in this area would be through some of the most fertile farm land in the state. It is not acceptable to pave over prime farmland so people from Portland can get to the coast more quickly.
- There is no guarantee that even a new bridge could be made earthquake proof. In the event that the bridge becomes un-usable after "the big one", we would be wise to have working ferries available to cross the river, rather than try to repair broken bridges.

It is widely understood by transportation experts that we cannot build our way out of traffic congestion. We need to look at alternatives to the single occupancy vehicle, including more mass transit. Please put your efforts toward expanding the passenger rail system up and down the valley and investing in efficient, frequent bus service within the cities and between communities. HB 2017 was a good start in the right direction. Please don't let the momentum of that effort die down.

Thank you for your consideration.

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