

Testimony of Randy Tucker, Legislative Affairs Manager
In Support of House Bill 2837
House Committee on Rules
March 16, 2021



Chair Smith Warner and Members of the Committee:

Metro is the regional government of the greater Portland metropolitan area, tasked by Oregon statute with making decisions about how and where the region will grow. Our region has a strong track record of supporting the core purposes of Oregon's statewide planning system – protecting farms and forests by facilitating efficient urban development, while providing additional room for people and jobs when needed by expanding the urban growth boundary.

In 2007, a broad range of interests dissatisfied with the longstanding system for expanding the Portland region's UGB came together to support Senate Bill 1011, which established a new and better process for long-range growth management in the region. SB 1011 authorized the designation of urban reserves, which anticipate the region's 50-year need for urban land and are first priority for inclusion in the UGB, and rural reserves, which are off limits to UGB expansion for that same 50 year period. While the actual designation of these reserves proved more challenging than expected, that process is finally complete, and the system provides both flexibility and predictability to growth management in the Portland metropolitan region.

Long-range designation of rural reserves is critical to protect some of Oregon's best farmland from development pressure. Those designations are difficult to change by design, and Metro strongly opposes legislation that is occasionally proposed to change them in response to landowner pressure. However, it has become clear that the Lasich Lane situation addressed by HB 2837 simply reflects a mapping error in the initial designation of urban and rural reserves in Washington County – a designation that was finalized by HB 4078 in 2014 after a legal challenge to those reserves.

Washington County recently completed a transportation study, funded by Metro, to look at future transportation impacts on the existing and planned road system in this portion of Washington County from the 2011 and 2018 UGB expansions in the Cooper Mountain area as well the potential urbanization of nearby urban reserves. This study indicated the need for a north-south route parallel to SW Roy Rogers Road to address future congestion concerns along that road and to provide internal connectivity opportunities within the River Terrace West urban reserve as well as an alternative route for bicyclists and pedestrians. In addition, the City of Tigard owns the parcel of land adjacent to the south side of Lasich Lane with the expectation of constructing a future park with access to the Tualatin River.

The removal of the rural reserve designation along Lasich Lane will enable Washington County to plan for the connection of the parallel roadway extension while also providing an alternative access point for the future Tigard park site away from the very busy SW Roy Rogers Road/SW Beef Bend Road intersection. The integrity of the rural reserve area that includes the Tualatin River riparian area and the large block of agricultural activities west of the river would not be impacted by the removal of the Lasich Lane portion of the rural reserve.

For these reasons, Metro supports HB 2837 and urges you to move it forward. Thank you very much for considering these comments.