

April 1, 2021

2021 Legislative Session
House Committee on Agriculture and Natural Resources

Subject: AOC Testimony in Support HB 3281

Dear Chair Witt, Vice-Chairs Breese-Iverson, Hudson and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today on important legislation related to Oregon's commitment to develop an incredible resource for our state, the Oregon Coast Trail (OCT).

For the record, my name is Andy Smith. I am testifying today on behalf of the Association of Oregon Counties (AOC), where I serve as the Director of the County Solutions program.

AOC strongly supports HB 3281 as a tool to help improve and expand the safety, quality sustainability of the Oregon Coast Trail. Our coastal communities and the whole state will benefit greatly from continued investment in this unique natural treasure.

We are privileged to be part of a collaborative OCT partnership between AOC, Oregon Parks and Recreation Department (OPRD), and the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT), Western Federal Lands Highway Division. An additional partner in work is the Portland State University Oregon Solutions program who is assisting with our work on long term governance efforts. The overall effort is funded by a Federal Lands Access Program or "FLAP" planning grant from the USDOT that runs through 2022.

Our role at AOC County Solutions is to lead the partnership effort on three specific fronts related to existing trail gaps and/or safety concerns:

- Engage communities along North, Central, and South Coast Segment to create Declarations of Cooperation that detail improvements in the trail;
- A Declaration of Cooperation for long-term governance of the OCT between key federal and state partners;
- A final planning document incorporating Declarations of Cooperation, addressing all aspects of HB 3149 (2017), to help develop conceptual drawing and cost estimates to advance future design and construction needs of the remaining gaps in the OCT.

As you may know, the OCT parallels all 362-miles of the Oregon coast. Sections of the trail are on federal lands or connect to federal trails. While maps depict a complete route and the OCT was declared "hike-able" in 1988, we need to make or improve connections between accessible beaches, developed trails, the shoulder of HWY 101 and local roads. Some of these portions are unsafe and many hikers opt for a car, shuttle, or public transportation to make connections; other hikers skip these sections entirely.

The bill before you today, HB 3281, would provide critical resources to address and improve existing gaps the Oregon Coast Trail. The bill would allow the community based planning efforts we are doing under our current federal grant to become a reality --- simply put, we need these state investments to make vital headway in fixing existing trail gaps and/or safety concerns.

Thank you again for the opportunity to be part of a legacy to preserve and improve access to this unique natural wonder for future generations.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A. J. Smith', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Andrew J. Smith
Association of Oregon Counties
Director, County Solutions Program