



POLK COUNTY

BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

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Administrative Officer

February 1, 2023

To: Joint Committee on Transportation,
Co-Chairs Senator Gorsek and Representative McLain,
And members of the Committee,

We are writing to express our support for HB 2137, establishing a task force to study and provide recommendations to decision makers on the potential need for an additional Willamette River Crossing between Polk and Marion Counties.

Though you will receive testimony that expresses that the question has been asked and answered over this very controversial issue, we can tell you that Polk County citizens deal with the congestion, delays, disruptions and constant unknowns of what traffic tragedy will next shut down the very limited bridge access we have now.

Polk County will acknowledge that there are significant differences of opinion over how to best plan our needs for crossing the Willamette River in the future, and some will say that it is about the cost first, or greenhouse gas emissions first, but as a community of the mid-Willamette Valley we collectively haven't closed the books on this discussion. The Salem City Council closed the discussion on previous efforts and made it clear that they did not want the bridge in their city in spite of majority support from Polk County community leaders.

Polk County is still willing to have the project discussion and also eager to consider alternative locations outside the city of Salem. As Polk County grows (population near 88,000) and many people commute out of county for their jobs and business, alternative river crossings are essential for our economic growth and vitality.

Please give strong consideration to this bill so that it can move forward, and the essential work that this task force should bring back for public discussions.

Commissioner Craig Pope, Polk County