

Submitter: Phillip Johnson

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Joint Interim Committee On Transportation  
Funding

Measure, Appointment or  
Topic: LC 2

To the Joint Interim Committee on Transportation Funding:

I would like to call your attention to a potential source of \$100 million in funding for basic transportation needs. Cancel the money the legislature allocated for the horribly misbegotten scheme to build a container port at Coos Bay.

While no one can say for sure, I believe it is very probable that the port if built will be a commercial failure and become a white elephant. There is sufficient capacity at West Coast ports immediately adjacent to primary rail hubs. There is little need for a port 110 miles away from a secondary hub. Any shippers using a Coos Bay port would probably be taking business from the Port of Portland.

What I can say for sure is that construction of the port, and in particular the dredging it will require, will destroy the ecosystems of lower Coos Bay, and greatly affect the upper estuary as well. Reaming out the estuary down to bedrock will eliminate the eelgrass beds and sediments that are key habitat for the salmon, Dungeness crabs, and sardines that are harvested by the Charleston fishing fleet and other Oregon fishers, not to mention a large suite of other organisms. Construction of the port itself will damage shoreline and marsh habitats. The deeper and wider channel will rifle storm surges (not to mention tsunamis) far up the bay. The habitats that would be destroyed cannot be replicated in the upper estuary, as project proponents pretend.

The eelgrass and mudflats also provide significant carbon storage, so the project would contribute to global warming.

Dredging the bay and constructing the port would be grotesque environmental abuse.

What holds back healthy, desirable growth in the Coos Bay area isn't lack of jobs--it is lack of affordable housing. The last thing Coos County needs is an invasion by thousands of workers with no ties to the area completely flooding the housing market and inflating costs for a few years, then moving on, leaving behind an ugly, noisy port that will employ relatively few people and make the area far less desirable to everyone else.

It would be the height of irresponsibility to fund this blue-sky development scheme while ODOT lacks funds for basic highway maintenance and non-fossil-fuel infrastructure.

There is no guarantee that the port will ever be built, nor that it will succeed if built. But the \$100 million directed to the dredging project could destroy the estuary before we ever find out. Please advocate for withdrawing these funds and directing them toward transportation needs instead.

Sincerely,

Phillip Johnson  
605 S.E. 37th Ave.  
Portland, OR 97214  
(503) 754-9303