



Washington State Legislature

Feb. 18, 2014

Senate and House Members
Joint Ways & Means Committee
Oregon State Legislature

Electronic Transmission:

Dear Honorable members of the Oregon Joint Ways and Means Committee:

As elected Washington state legislators, we represent a majority of Clark County residents in Southwest Washington. In this capacity, we urge Oregon's Joint Ways and Means Committee members to reject House Bill 4113, which modifies conditions that must be met before the Oregon State Treasurer may issue bonds to pay for an Interstate 5 bridge replacement project. Please join us in respecting the will of an overwhelming majority of voters who have soundly rejected the proposed light-rail crossing project between Portland and Southwest Washington time after time.

Clark County citizens have voted against light rail numerous times, most recently on Nov. 5, 2013. In this last election, voters passed Clark County Advisory Vote No. 1 by an overwhelming 68 percent. With this election, Clark County voters demanded they have a say in any future light-rail project. House Bill 4113 would openly defy the will of our voters!

Our primary concern is that the Oregon Legislature is considering House Bill 4113, a proposal which not only is against the will of a large majority of our voters in Clark County, but would also bypass the required federal "local buy-in" from Oregon and Washington residents and its local governments. The \$850 million federal match should not be approved when a measurement of "local buy-in" is established by special interests who are attempting to override the will of citizens and locally-elected county officials on both sides of the river.

Additionally, we are troubled by many aspects of the I-5 replacement bridge project as outlined in Oregon House Bill 4113:

- Sets the total cost of the project at \$2.9 billion, most of which would be recovered by tolls collected from Southwest Washington residents, and with toll-setting authority provided exclusively by Oregon officials.
- Over-estimates of traffic and revenue forecasts would result in shortfalls to throw this major toll-backed project into financial turmoil, leaving residents in Southwest Washington to foot the bill.
- Creates a non-elected "Mobility Council" made up of Oregon residents to identify impacts and provide input resulting from I-205 diversion as a result of the I-5 bridge replacement project without any input from Washington residents or legislators.

- Authorizes citations by highway cameras and gives Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) authority to impound vehicles for failure to pay tolls, with fines ranging from \$25 up to \$1,000 per infraction.
- Authorizes ODOT or vendors to begin collecting tolls prior to construction.
- Provides broad authority to the Oregon State Treasurer to issue toll-backed revenue bonds sufficient to cover potentially significant cost overruns.

"Optimism bias" is endemic in the toll forecasting business - driven by sponsors to produce the exaggerated forecasts they want. All too often, taxpayers are left holding the bag, resulting in actual tolls being raised at double and triple the initial projected rates.

Further, the signatures below show that legislators representing Clark County citizens are opposed to the bridge as it is currently designed. We are troubled by the proposed lower height and the impact it would have on commerce by blocking shipment of products currently being manufactured upstream of the bridge. Despite the unfunded \$86 million in compensation that has been promised to only three of the many Vancouver companies that would be harmed, the issue remains that current manufacturers would likely be forced to relocate due to the lower clearance of the current proposal. And, at a time when all other ports around our nation are designing infrastructure to get larger loads through their ports and beneath their bridges, this becomes an especially unwise decision to make the new span lower than the current one.

We remain opposed to the inclusion of light rail in the project. We understand that transit could be an important component of urban transportation, but this investment grade tolling plan would require local commuters in Southwest Washington to pay for the greatest share of the bridge and general purpose lanes, as no federal funds would be provided for construction of those lanes. Additionally, light rail would not deliver the promised congestion relief since it would substitute for current bus routes. This threatens to leave transit riders with longer commutes and higher taxes as the only outcome.

We believe attempts to build an Oregon-only bridge may face legal hurdles, delaying the process far more than if we spent time working together between Washington and Oregon to redesign the bridge to meet actual regional transportation needs—and not the needs of special interests.

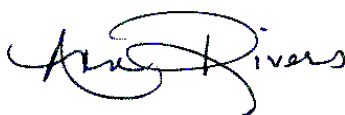
As state legislators representing a majority of Clark County residents, we urge our colleagues in the Oregon Legislature to respect the will of our voters by rejecting any light-rail crossing project between Oregon and Southwest Washington.

Instead of proceeding with a flawed and unwelcome project, let's work together to identify a transportation solution on this important bi-state project that would meet the needs of all our residents on both sides of the Columbia River.

Sincerely,



Representative Liz Pike
18th Legislative District



Senator Ann Rivers
18th Legislative District



Senator Don Benton
17th Legislative District



Senator John Braun
20th Legislative District



Representative Ed Orcutt
20th Legislative District



Senator Curtis King
14th Legislative District



Representative Charles Ross
14th Legislative District



Representative Paul Harris
17th Legislative District



Representative Norm Johnson
14th Legislative District



Representative Brandon Vick
18th Legislative District