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April 1, 2019

House Rules Committee  
Oregon State Capitol  
900 Court Street NE  
Salem, OR 97301

**RE: Opposition to HB 2974** - Authorizes formation of bridge district in capital city region, consisting of Linn, Marion, Polk and Yamhill Counties. Authorizes bridge district to levy property taxes for purpose of planning, financing, constructing, operating and maintaining bridges over Willamette River in capital city region. Provides for organization of district board consisting of four members, one elected from each of four counties in capital city region, and one member representing Department of Transportation appointed by Governor. Takes effect on 91st day following adjournment sine die.

Dear Chair Holvey and Committee Members:

Friends of Marion County is a 501(c)(3) farmland protection organization founded in 1998. Our mission is to protect farm and forestland, parks, and open space.

There are so many reasons the committee should reject this proposal and I will list just a few here.

1. The bill overrides the recent decision of the Salem City Council after years of thoughtful debate. There is no guarantee the Bridge District Board will not select the already failed site over the Willamette River in Salem.
2. Some members of the SCC were elected because of their opposition to the proposed bridge.
3. The proposed Bridge District will collect funds to plan, design, build and maintain a 3rd bridge.
4. The Bridge District will tax property owners in 4 counties most of whom will never use the bridge during the hours of congestion.
5. If tolling is also required to pay for the bridge, drivers will travel another route to avoid the cost which means other neighboring bridges will need to be equally tolled.
6. We are trying to reduce our dependence on traffic throughout the region and adding another route will merely increase that traffic volume.

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7. The project is estimated to cost more than \$400MM and therefore consume all local transportation dollars.
8. ODOT and The City of Salem need to come together to solve the congestion which occurs only at rush hour times or during the rare case of emergency.
9. Ramps and traffic control measures at the feet of the current bridges can be improved. There are a number of proposals already under consideration by the Salem City Council task force.
10. Seismic retrofits of the existing bridges are much cheaper than building a new bridge. There are funds already allocated to do this.
11. Any proposal to advance a new bridge in North Marion County will infringe on the best Mid-valley farmland, inc. French Prairie and Champoeg. A bridge at these locations will attract other transportation services, i.e., gas stations, truck stops, restaurants, and other uses in conflict with High-value farm operations.

I hope this letter provides an important view of the proposal and that the Committee will reject this measure.

Thank you for listening.

Roger Kaye, President  
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c: Jason Miner, Office of the Governor  
Senate President Peter Courtney  
House Speaker Tina Kotek  
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