

Phillip H. Gerstner
7251 Fieldview St NE
Keizer, OR 97303

February 1, 2023

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

I am writing in support of HB 2137 which establishes a task force to study and inform decision-makers on an additional Willamette River Crossing between Marion and Polk counties.

I have followed this issue for many years. I live in Keizer and have commuted first to Dallas, and now to West Salem, for over 27 years. I have seen traffic congestion increase on the Marion and Center Street bridges over this time period. I invite any legislator to travel to West Salem from Salem during the evening rush hour to experience the daily traffic jam. I have also been stuck in traffic when there has been a bridge accident or other incident, e.g., a jumper, on the bridge. Traffic immediately backs up for literally miles. These events clearly show that the loss of access to a bridge immediately cripples the ability to move people and equipment from Marion to Polk county or vice versa. An earthquake or other natural disaster that prevented movement across these two bridges would have dire consequences for both life and property on both sides of the bridges.

One argument against an additional bridge is that an additional bridge will have negative effects on the climate. The theory is that an additional bridge will increase the production of greenhouse gases. More carbon is produced from the same volume of stop-and-go traffic than from steadily moving traffic. The move to electric vehicles will also decrease the amount of carbon emissions. Oregon is one of the leading states adopting electric vehicles. The idea that an additional bridge will increase carbon emissions is flawed.

I have also seen testimony that the majority of the Salem City Council is in opposition to a third bridge. This may be true, but it does not mean that the majority of the citizens oppose a third bridge. I was present in several council

hearings where the majority of citizen testimony was in favor of a third bridge. I was dumbfounded when the council voted not to advance the process of securing a third bridge. At the conclusion of that vote, the mayor publicly stated that the council made a mistake in voting against the public's wishes. There is a large degree of citizen anger and disgust over that council vote.

I strongly urge you to approve the formation of the Willamette River Bridge Task Force by approving HB 2137.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Phillip H. Gerstner". The signature is written in black ink and features a long, sweeping horizontal line that extends across the width of the name.

Phillip H. Gerstner