

## Willamette River Bridge Testimony – In Support

Currently the bottle neck on the West Salem bridge is hindering businesses growth rate in West Salem. More houses, and especially the number of apartment units being built, are also contributing to the daily traffic issue on the current bridge structures.

For the additional family homes being built in West Salem, there needs to be family-friendly options for transportation. Families with kids in sports and other activities cannot simply take a bus or bicycle with all their gear in tow and meet the activity schedules. The main thing I hear in opposition is “you can ride the bus.” That DOES NOT WORK for nearly every active family.

Currently commercial trucks must drive through downtown Salem and cross the Marion Street bridge to get from I-5 to Hwy OR22 West. That is a lot of highway traffic that could be diverted to another bridge to the north. In 2018, ODOT<sup>1</sup> recorded an Annual Average Daily Traffic volume of 47,900 East bound (Center St) and 47,600 West bound bridge traffic (Marion St). In addition, ODOT reports a net increase in Highway Miles traveled consistently since 2013. NOTE that although there was a huge drop in travel in 2020, the travel rebounded higher in 2021, a little higher than the previous year over year growth.<sup>2</sup> Interestingly, although the actual travel across Marion St and Center St crossings have also dropped during 2020, they are also rebounding, at a delayed rate (7%) behind the State average (12.86%).<sup>3</sup> The evidence here shows growth on the roads WILL happen and we are feeling the effects crossing in and out of West Salem.

Emissions is another concern brought up by the opposition. If there are less cars idle on the bridge, there will be less emissions. As cars, fuels, and fuel alternatives progress for consumers, there will be less emissions. Consumers will buy these new alternatives when they financially make sense for the consumer—driven by the market.

Lastly, I raise the concern of safety and emergency services. The Salem Hospital is downtown. However, if there is a traffic accident on the Center St bridge, treatment for life-threatening issues will be delayed for someone in West Salem. If there is a major incident in West Salem while an accident happens on the Marion St bridge, Salem Police will be delayed in responding in force. With an additional bridge (another route option), delays would be drastically reduced in these scenarios.

Bottom line: Salem growth is happening with housing and businesses. The traffic infrastructure MUST grow, too.

<sup>1</sup> [https://www.oregon.gov/odot/Data/Documents/TVT\\_complete\\_2018.pdf](https://www.oregon.gov/odot/Data/Documents/TVT_complete_2018.pdf) /AADT for Marion-Polk County Line

<sup>2</sup> [https://www.oregon.gov/odot/Data/Documents/TVT\\_complete\\_2021.pdf](https://www.oregon.gov/odot/Data/Documents/TVT_complete_2021.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.oregon.gov/ODOT/Data/Pages/Traffic-Counting.aspx>

-Submitted by Chris Cummings  
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