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February 3, 2023

Joint Committee on Transportation  
Oregon State Capitol  
900 Court Street NE  
Salem, OR 97301

**RE: Vote "NO" on HB 2137 - Bridge Task Force**

To: Joint Committee on Transportation

Dear: Co-Chairs Gorsek & McLain,  
Co-Vice Chairs Boquist & Boshart Davis

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

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

1. The task force will become another layer of government that will supercede the existing Mid-Willamette Valley Area Commission on Transportation (MWACT) which is an MPO whose members include only three counties; Marion, Polk, and Yamhill and the cities within them. Linn County is not a member of MWACT and therefore its cities also not members. The Confederated Tribes of the Grande Ronde represent some members who are not in the four county district region. MWACT coordinates spending of city, county and ODOT funding which means any participation of the three counties in MWACT could not tap into Linn County or its cities transportation spending. Because of the diversity of interests in MWACT it's quite possible internal disputes will result in zero contributions to the district. In any event, most of MWACT planning and funding require ODOT concurrence. MWACT is already in place and has an established process for regional transportation planning; the region should use the existing processes.

2. The proposed bridge project will collect funds to plan, design, build and maintain a new bridge. However a proposed bridge may require substantial investment to re-route traffic around the current Salem bridges.

3. The bridge project will tax property owners in 4 counties most of whom will never use the bridge during the hours of congestion.
4. 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.
5. We are trying to reduce our dependence on traffic throughout the region and adding another route will merely increase that traffic volume.
6. A bridge project is estimated to cost more than \$400MM and therefore consume all local transportation dollars.
7. 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.
8. Seismic retrofits of the existing bridges are much cheaper than building a new bridge. There are funds already allocated to do this.
9. 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 Joint Committee on Transportation will reject this measure.

Thank you for listening.

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