

Feb. 4, 2025

Dear Chair Sollman, Vice Chair Brock Smith, and Members of the Committee,

I am the author of three hiking guidebooks from Mountaineers Books, including *Hiking the Oregon Coast Trail*, as well as a navigational app for the OCT from FarOut Guides. I have hiked extensively on the Oregon Coast for more than 30 years. I am very familiar with the entire Oregon Coast Trail, with its specific maintenance challenges and with the gaps in the trail that force hikers onto the shoulder of US 101, in sometimes very narrow, dangerous and lengthy sections. I have had the opportunity to speak with many OCT hikers on the trail, some of whom have travelled to Oregon from China, Ireland, Germany, New Zealand and many other countries after hearing rave reviews of the OCT from other long-distance hikers; they have shared with me what they love and don't love about the OCT. Most comments are extremely positive. High on the list of don't-loves, however, is the extensive highway shoulder walking. Completion of the Oregon Coast Trail Action Plan at the end of 2024 was a significant step toward mapping out how many of those trail gaps can be addressed and how the trail can be improved and regularly maintained.

But the Action Plan is of little value without allocation of funding that will allow the state to begin taking the steps the plan recommends. I am writing today to share my support for SB 929 which allocates \$1 million from the General Fund to further development of the Oregon Coast Trail.

Without new and dedicated funding, given its many competing priorities, Oregon Parks and Recreation Department does not have the ability to repair, maintain and complete this world-class recreation asset now, while the trail is still essentially under construction. I would like to see the agency maintain flexibility in Section 2 of the bill to allocate existing lottery dollars for system maintenance and upgrades.

Allocation of the relatively modest amount of funding called for in SB 929 will ensure that the significant investment of time and money represented by the OCT Action Plan will not be wasted. Investing in such actions as the OCT Action Plan will discourage the taxpayers who funded it if it gathers dust rather than prompting the concrete improvements called for in this detailed, professional and thoughtful plan.

Thank you for your continuing support of this exceptional example of sustainable tourism.

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