



February 18, 2025

Support for SB 179: Recreational Immunity

Dear Chair Prozanski, Vice-Chair Thatcher, and Members of the Committee,

The Oregon Trails Coalition advisory council includes federal, state, and local agencies, trail user groups, outdoor industry and tourism partners, and volunteer organizations. We represent walkers, bikers, runners, paddlers, equestrians, adaptive equipment users, skiers, snowmobilers, and motorized trail enthusiasts.

We are here today to share our support for SB 179, to remove the sunset on the current law and provide lasting recreational immunity protections in Oregon.

In the most recent State Recreational Plan, more than 80% of Oregonians surveyed reported using local trails. Trails are critical for our community health and well-being, access to nature, safe alternatives to high-traffic roadways, and to tourism and economic vitality.

We have heard loud and clear from our members across the state that lasting recreational immunity protections are foundational to keeping our beloved community trails open and keeping much-anticipated trail development projects on track.

Removing the sunset from the current law is crucial, and we fully support that step. We also want to highlight additional concerns we have heard from our members across the state that we hope the legislature will address.

1. Private landowners who have generously provided easements for off-street trail connections want to see the increased level of immunity in Section 1 of the bill extended to private landowners who open their land to the public free of charge.
2. We have heard a strong desire from our members to more strongly clarify that trails that serve dual purpose as both recreation and transportation facilities are covered under the law and ask the legislature to address the problem of subjective intent.
3. We believe broader language like "conveyance" rather than specific trail activities like "walking, biking, and running" currently spelled out in the "includes but is not limited to" recreational activities list would make the law more evergreen as the ways people travel and recreate continue to shift and expand with everything from rollerskates and skateboards to micromobility devices.

In early 2024 our primary concern was closures of existing trails. It is still a concern. However we also want you to know we have heard the Fields vs Newport case and the lack of clarity around recreational immunity in Oregon cited from Yamhill County to Union County as opposition to community-led trail development initiatives when the trails in question would



greatly increase the safety of local residents by providing off-street alternatives to rural highways for local families.

We know you share our concern for the safety and well-being of Oregonians and encourage you to pass the best recreational immunity legislation you possibly can this session.

Thank you for your leadership,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Stephanie Noll". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Stephanie Noll,
Director, Oregon Trails Coalition