

LETTER IN OPPOSITION SB 5701 - DISSTON FIRE STATION

Members of the Legislature,

I appreciate the goal of improving public safety in the Row River Valley, and I hold deep respect for our local fire and emergency personnel. However, **I respectfully oppose funding an additional fire station at Disston because it will not meaningfully improve emergency outcomes and risks misallocating limited public resources.**

Last summer, I personally encountered a neighbor's trailer fully ablaze and immediately called emergency services. Oregon Department of Forestry units arrived first and were actively engaged. Row River Fire arrived later and, despite their professionalism and willingness to help, were unable to provide meaningful assistance for several crucial minutes as the trailer burned to the ground. This was not a failure of effort or commitment—it was the unavoidable result of distance, terrain, and access.

That experience reflects the broader reality of the Row River Valley. Our geography—long travel distances, narrow river corridors, steep terrain, and dispersed residences—places hard limits on response times that no number of additional buildings can overcome. Adding stations along the river would dilute staffing, equipment, and funding without materially changing outcomes during fast-moving emergencies like structure fires or wildfires.

During major wildfire events, response in this area is already led by state and federal resources, particularly ODF, which have the scale and capability necessary for those incidents. A new local station would be largely duplicative during critical events and offer limited benefit for smaller ones that remain constrained by geography.

A more effective and fiscally responsible approach would focus on prevention and mitigation: fuels reduction, defensible space, improved access and water supply, and coordination with state wildfire resources. These measures directly reduce risk in ways infrastructure expansion cannot.

The challenges of the Row River Valley are not caused by a lack of buildings, but by immutable geographic realities. Public funds should be directed toward solutions that acknowledge those realities and deliver measurable risk reduction.

Thank you for your consideration.



Timothy Lowrey