

Visit McMinnville

May 4th, 2021

The Honorable Senator Fred Girod, Co-Chair
The Honorable Representative Paul Holvey, Co-Chair
Joint Committee on Ways and Means Subcommittee on Capital Construction
900 Court Street NE
H-178 State Capitol
Salem, Oregon 97301

RE: Support for the Bonding Authorization of \$32 million for the Newberg-Dundee Bypass in SB 5534

Co-Chairs Holvey, Girod and Members of the Committee,

Visit McMinnville appreciates the tremendous work that was accomplished in 2017 regarding Oregon's transportation infrastructure and your ongoing work to meet that promise of delivering a successful, modernized transportation system. While each county has its local priorities, we are writing to highlight a regional project that has significance to McMinnville: the Newberg-Dundee Bypass. Just as the entire state of Oregon is impacted by the congestion in the Portland metro area, the entire region stretching from Washington County, Yamhill, and Marion County to the Central Coast counties of Tillamook and Lincoln are impacted by the severe congestion on US 99W from the Portland metro area to the intersection with Oregon Hwy 18 and beyond.

Highway 99W, a main travel shed used to connect the Portland area to wine country and the central Oregon Coast has become an infamous bottleneck among tourists, businesses moving freight and commuters alike. This has had negative implications for economic development, tourism, the environment and the livability of our citizens in the coastal area.

Highway 99W and Hwy18 connect the first, second and third largest tourism regions in the state, Portland, the Willamette Valley Wine Country and the Oregon Coast. The visitor economy is growing. Tourism has an annual \$12 billion impact on the state of Oregon and the Wine industry a \$7.2 billion annual impact. The majority of Oregon Wine Industry assets are based in Yamhill County and are growing. These critical highways are becoming more and more congested.

The Newberg-Dundee Bypass is designed to relieve these intense congestion issues, and Phase 1 – the first 4 miles of the 11 mile bypass – is completed and is operational.

Thanks to investments made by the Legislature and the Oregon Transportation Commission over the past two years, Phase 2 of the bypass is now shovel ready. This \$32 million in state lottery bond funding will enable ODOT to move to construction on Phase II of the bypass while providing a critical state match that can leverage federal dollars to complete construction.

The entire bypass must be completed or we will not realize the benefit of this massive investment. The project goals for congestion relief, safety improvements, community livability, greenhouse gas emission reduction, improvement of freight traffic and seismic resiliency will only be achieved by finishing the project. Our ability to grow as a community will be stifled without a transportation infrastructure that can meet the demands brought on by further economic development. With the Newberg-Dundee Bypass finished, our businesses can get products to market while accommodating a growing, much needed visitor economy in a far more efficient and safe manner. Furthermore, the entire region from the state's biggest metropolitan area to the central coast will benefit from the freer flow of traffic on 99W created by the Bypass. This is truly a critical regional project.

It is also of utmost importance to remember that the Bypass is on the tsunami evacuation route and would be critical in moving people and emergency services to and from the coast in the event of a Cascadia Earthquake. Phase 1 is the only piece of state infrastructure built to withstand a 9.0 magnitude earthquake, other than the Tillikum crossing bridge in Portland.

Visit McMinnville urges you to consider necessary funding taking advantage of federal opportunities we have to ensure completion of this vital project. We know there is great need across the state for projects large and small, urban and rural, multimodal and seismic, but the overarching goal, in order to ensure public support and confidence, should be to support projects that in the end are effective. We know that the Newberg-Dundee Bypass will only be effective if the entire bypass is completed. We join with the Yamhill County Parkway Committee in urging the completion of the entire bypass and point out the positioning of the project for completion as set forth in the Parkway Committee's Resolution.

Thank you for your consideration and leadership in the days ahead. Visit McMinnville looks forward to being a resource to you and your colleagues in order to complete the bypass project.

Sincerely,

Jeff Knapp
Executive Director Visit McMinnville
jeff@visitmcminnville
971-241-8808
visitmcminnville.com