



# POLK COUNTY

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

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AUSTIN M<sup>C</sup>GUIGAN  
Director

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Project Bridge Watch  
c/o Polk County Board of Commissioners  
Polk County Courthouse  
850 Main Street  
Dallas, OR 97338

Dear Friends,

The Center and Marion Street bridges crossing the Willamette River are the lifeline to the region. Not only do they serve to connect West Salem to Salem proper, they also provide a necessary connection to the Interstate 5 corridor and Salem metropolitan area.

In Oregon, the ability to attract or enhance industries is often dependant on having safe, efficient and reliable access to Interstate 5. For Polk County, the Center and Marion Street bridges are a critical link to the interstate highway. This connection serves several important factors to the region. Resource related industries in Polk County such as agriculture and timber rely on the river crossing to get products to market. This need extends beyond Polk County and includes Benton, Lincoln, Tillamook and Yamhill counties. These industries are critical to the rural economy and community. In addition, the cities of Dallas, Falls City, Independence Monmouth, Sheridan, Willamina and the central coast also depend on a safe, efficient and reliable Willamette River crossing for their residents, tourism and commercial and industrial industries. Increasing congestion on the existing bridges has done more than inconvenience Salem residents; it has increased safety risks and negatively impacted freight mobility by increasing travel times. These impacts have a negative effect on the entire region's quality of life.

Polk County has worked to identify and address rural and regional transportation needs. The Highway 22 and 99 intersection has been replaced with an interchange improving safety and increasing capacity. Polk County is beginning the planning process to improve the Highway 22 and 51, and Highway 22 and Doaks Ferry Road intersections. Addressing the congestion on the Center and Marion Street bridges is a critical component to meeting the transportation needs of the County and region. I strongly support another Willamette River bridge crossing that will serve the economic, transportation and safety needs of the region. I encourage County residents to support this effort by contacting elected officials with letters of support which in turn will demonstrate the broad public benefit.

Sincerely,

Austin M<sup>C</sup>Guigan, Director  
Polk County Community Development