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Project Bridge Watch
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Dear Friends:

I have been involved in the process of identifying Willamette River crossing alternatives for over a decade, since I was Mayor of the City of Independence in the 1990s. Construction of a new bridge over the Willamette is major undertaking that will require hundreds of millions of dollars in funding, the cooperation and coordination of multiple jurisdictions, and free-moving highway connections to existing infrastructure on both sides of the river.

While it is a fact that reducing congestion on the existing bridges is an important matter to our West Salem constituents, Polk County knows that good access to the east side of the Willamette and the Interstate 5 corridor is critical to a much larger region that encompasses more than four counties and extends to the central Oregon coast.

After a half-century of studying river crossings, we know that the general public in western Oregon is demanding more substantial steps toward constructing a new bridge over the Willamette in the Salem area that bypasses downtown and freely connects our state highway system and the freeway.

We also know that decision-makers at the state and federal level need to be convinced regularly that this is a transportation policy priority of everyone in our region.

That is why we are pleased to present the Bridge Watch inter-active website. We hope you will use it, not only to inform yourself about river crossing issues, but also to communicate your interest in improving mobility in the region by building a new Willamette River bridge. We promise your responses will be forwarded to your state, federal and local elected officials to make sure they know a new bridge is important to you too.

Thanks for joining us at Bridge Watch. We hope you'll come back often and share your views with us.

Tom Ritchey, Chair
Polk County Board of Commissioners