



Alan Unger, Commissioner  
Deschutes County Commission  
PO Box 6005  
ATTN: BOCC  
Bend, OR 97708-6005

July 31, 2015

Dear Commissioner Unger,

The Environmental Center is writing to express its support for the proposed paved multiuse trail from Black Butte Ranch to Sisters.

As you know, The Environmental Center promotes a healthy natural environment and we is committed to helping everyone in Central Oregon contribute to this goal. We are a center for education, collaboration and action focused on sustainable living. We are especially interested in projects that encourage families and their children to play outdoors to learn about nature and conservation and to use alternative forms of transportation as much as possible in their daily lives.

We are aware of the intense public controversy about this trail, mounted by several residents in Black Butte Ranch and Tollgate. At the same time, official polls show that the majority of residents of those two developments favor the trail by a margin of over two to one, and that over two-thirds of Sisters businesses support it. We think the trail has clear community support despite the controversy.

As you are also well aware, paved trails are a valuable pedestrian and bicycling amenity in any community. They encourage healthy exercise for everyone—from little kids to old folks. They offer an environmentally sound option for non-motorized, carbon emission-reducing transportation connection among communities. They support local economic development by helping attract tourists to visit and to prolong their stays. And they can be used as linear classrooms to teach environmental stewardship. These positive effects are well documented in studies across the US, including here in Central Oregon.

The great advantage of a paved trail is that it is equitable. It can be used by everyone: from the healthy to the handicapped, from the very young to the very old, from solitary users to family outings. Except for a few trails within incorporated areas, the only paved trail in Deschutes County is between Lava Lands and Sunriver. This lack of paved trails stands in stark contrast to



the hundreds of miles of dirt tracks and gravel roads already available for the walkers and cyclists who prefer them, but which are not suitable to so many other users.

For these reasons, The Environmental Center strongly endorses the proposed trail and fully supports all efforts to resubmit it to the Forest Service for a 2<sup>nd</sup> Environmental Assessment for careful and thorough public scoping and consideration of all alternatives. We think this is a project that is important to the health of our community and its citizens. We urge the Commission to be as proactive as possible in helping it move the project forward as quickly as possible.

Sincerely,



Diane Dedrick, President  
Board of Directors



Mike Riley  
Executive Director

CC: Commissioners Tony DeBone and Tammy Baney