

Bryan Colbourne - Fwd: Sides have their say at third bridge hearing. Give it up. .enough of this jamming this bridge down people's throats. Ann

From: Amber Mathiesen
To: Bryan Colbourne
Date: 10/13/2016 4:02 PM
Subject: Fwd: Sides have their say at third bridge hearing. Give it up. .enough of this jamming this bridge down people's throats. Ann

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<http://www.statesmanjournal.com/story/news/2016/10/12/sides-have-their-say-third-bridge-hearing/91955602/>

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Sides have their say at third bridge hearing

Jonathan M Bach, Statesman Journal 10:57 a.m. PDT October 13, 2016



(Photo: Jonathan Bach / Statesman Journal)

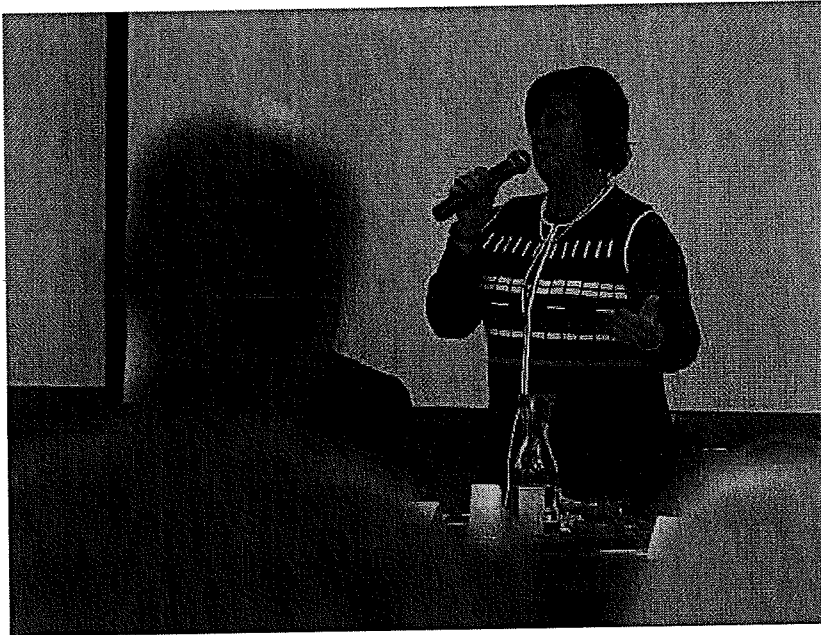
Update, Oct. 13: This article has been updated to accurately reflect the name of a local group opposing the third bridge.

Opposing sides of a controversial public works project had their say in front of peers and public officials Wednesday evening as a hearing on a third motorist bridge connecting West Salem and Marion County took place at Salem's Center 50+.

The hearing comes as officials try to figure out how to place a third crossing over the Willamette River to thin congestion on two main arteries heading into and out of Salem.

Mayor Anna Peterson presided over what she called an "unprecedented" meeting. Officials from Marion and Polk counties, along with the cities of Salem and Keizer, gathered with the public to discuss land use actions needed to accommodate the project.

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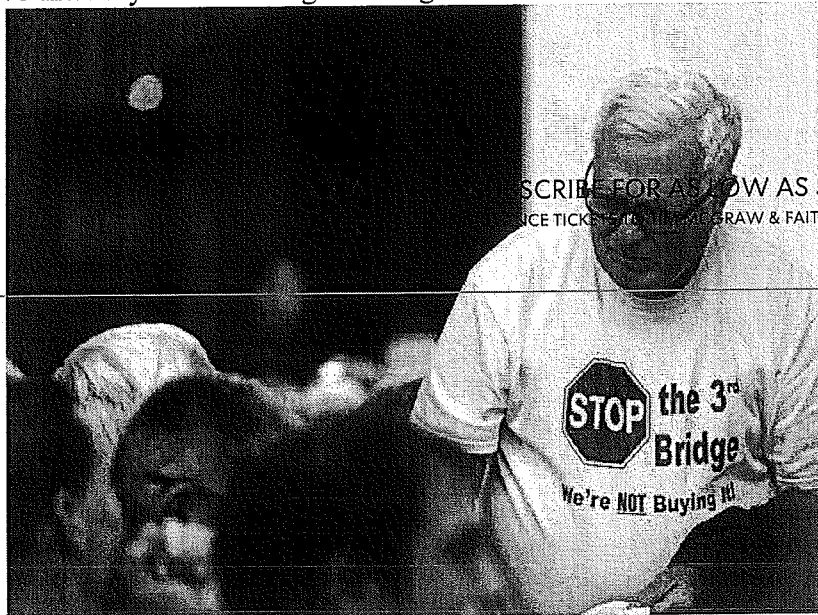


Mayor Anna Peterson presided over the third bridge public hearing at the Salem Senior Center 50+ on Wednesday. (Photo: Jonathan Bach / Statesman Journal)

Per the latest plan, the bridge would require an increase of about 35 acres in the Salem-Keizer urban growth boundary, among other changes.

Proponents of the project say a new bridge is needed to cut congestion. Opponents have argued it's too expensive, saying the city should divert funds to better equip two current bridges with seismic upgrades in case there's an earthquake. They have also cited home and business displacements that would be caused by a third span's construction.

Jim Schepcke, a member of No 3rd Bridge, a local group opposing the project, passed out signs and tried to sell t-shirts before the meeting started.



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An opponent of the third bridge connecting West Salem and Marion County takes his seat after testifying at a public hearing for the project in this Wednesday, Oct. 12, 2016 photo. (Photo: Jonathan Bach / Statesman Journal)

Signs, stickers and t-shirts against the bridge peppered the room of more than 150.

Sarah Deumling, 70, wore one of the white and red shirts.

"I think you bridge folks are on the wrong side of history," she said. The addition of the bridge, she said, would only exacerbate the problem of climate change because of the increased traffic in the area.

Deumling argued bridge supporters would "be scrambling" in the future to reverse their positions.

During the break outside the meeting, one businessman balked at the climate change argument.

"Salem is not getting any smaller," said Mark Coutis, who works with a construction firm. He said cars burn fuel while they're waiting in traffic.

His solution: Not one bridge, but two. And he wants his firm to build them.

Coutis chatted with business owner Dirk Moeller at the intermission. Moeller, who runs a call center in Salem, lamented looking out his window and seeing heavy congestion.

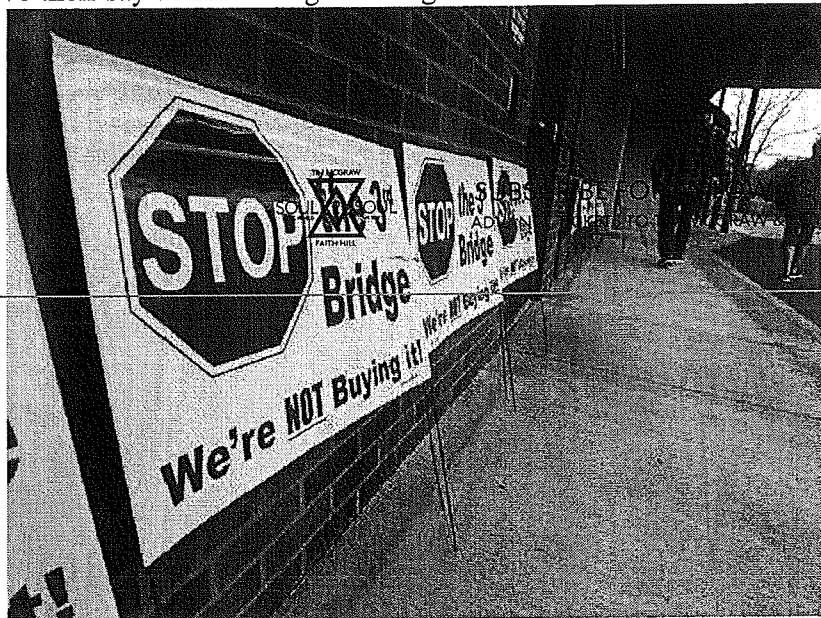
When he stepped up to speak before the break, Moeller suggested Oregon Department of Transportation dollars were going to be spread out around the state anyway, so Salem may as well take advantage of them and build the bridge.

"We need to plan for the future," he said.

About two hours into the hearing, people who'd testified for and against the project were fairly evenly split.

The meeting was a chance for public input before the bridge project would, in theory, head to state and federal officials for approval.

The official bodies gathered have to go back to their populations to get the land use actions talked about at Wednesday's meeting approved, Salem's transportation planning manager Julie Warncke said.



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Signs against the construction of a third bridge connection Marion County and West Salem line an outside wall of the Salem Senior Center 50+ in this Wednesday, Oct. 12, 2016 photo. (Photo: Jonathan Bach / Statesman Journal)

If the land use actions go through, the project will go to the Oregon Department of Transportation and the Federal Highway Administration for approval. There would also be a broader environmental impact study published.

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