

State Representative  
Cliff Bentz  
House District 60

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CONTACT: Representative Cliff Bentz  
541-889-8866



## **Representative Cliff Bentz Helps Secure \$2 Million for Juntura Cutoff Road Project**

*Supports Local Industry and Recreational Opportunities*

SALEM, Ore.—The Oregon Legislature, in the short 2016 Session just ended, approved \$2 million of funding for the Juntura Cutoff Road Project in Malheur and Harney Counties. The funding will complete the \$6.9 million dollar sum needed for the project which will reconstruct the failing road, providing essential support for local industry, ranching access, and recreational opportunities.

The Juntura Cutoff Road is of high importance for local economic development partners. The extraordinarily poor condition of the 7-mile long road has dramatically increased the cost of the mining operations conducted by EP Minerals, one of Malheur County's largest employers. Currently, the road serves as the main access point to the mine and a transportation route from the mine to EP Mineral's production facility in Vale. E. P. Minerals, Malheur County Economic Development, Business Oregon, ODOT, and Regional Solutions have coordinated to construct a financial package to fund the estimated \$6.9 million project. To date, they had secured approximately \$5.4 million. The \$2 million allocation from the Legislature will complete the funding for the project.

"E.P. Minerals, Malheur County Economic Development, Business Oregon, ODOT, Regional Solutions and both Malheur and Harney Counties have done great work in finding available funds to fix this critical access road," said Representative Cliff Bentz (R-Ontario). "The fact that a substantial portion of the mine is located on a State of Oregon School section of land, generating some 500,000.00 per year in mineral royalties to the state, certainly helped in making the argument that the state should contribute to the project. I am pleased the Legislature has recognized the importance of this project and has allocated \$2 million to finish the funding package. This has truly been a team effort."

In addition to supporting local business and industry, the Juntura Cutoff Road serves as a point of entry to both state and federal lands for recreational opportunities. During fire season, the road

also serves as one of the few access points for firefighters to protect a significant amount of BLM rangeland.

In 2015, Rep. Bentz presented the Juntura Cutoff Road, and the mine that it serves, as an economic development opportunity at the Oregon Business Summit, and later to several legislative committees. Rep. Bentz thanks Senator Betsy Johnson, who, volunteering the use of her private airplane, flew a number of legislators to Ontario a year or so ago for the express purpose of touring the road and the mine. He also thanks Rep. Greg Smith for his work. Their efforts played a significant role in the positive outcome of this funding effort.

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