



Testimony by City of Wilsonville Mayor Julie Fitzgerald Supporting HB 2564:

Proposed Legislation Provides for State to Accept Transfer Ownership of Willamette Falls Locks from Federal Government with Goal of Re-Opening

Scheduled for public hearing on February 11, 2021, before the Joint Committee on Transportation

Co-Chairs Beyer and McLain, and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of the City of Wilsonville City Council, I am testifying in support of HB 2564, which implements the legislatively chartered Willamette Falls Locks Commission recommendation to the Oregon Legislative Assembly to create the Willamette Falls Locks Authority as a state-chartered public corporation.

Creation of a State-related entity is an essential first step in facilitating the ownership transfer of the Locks from the federal government via the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (US ACE) to the State of Oregon. Transfer of the ownership of the Locks and a state/regional commitment to long-term maintenance is an essential first step to reopening the Locks to river travel.

In the Draft Disposition Study issued by the US ACE in May 2017, the Corps indicated a preference for transfer of the Locks to another entity or cementing the Locks shut permanently, foreclosing any future options. Reopening the Locks is to crucial to maintaining a key river transportation infrastructure connecting the lower and upper portions of the Willamette River.

Passage of HB 2564 sends a strong message of reinforcement to Congress and the federal government that the State of Oregon is serious about reopening the Locks, and provides the State an opportunity to leverage federal infrastructure funding for preliminary repairs.

The City of Wilsonville is a founding member of the Willamette Falls Locks Working Group and was one of three Willamette River cities appointed by the legislature to serve on the Willamette Fall Locks Commission through SB 256 of 2017. Wilsonville has vested interests along with other public- and private-sector stakeholders in reopening and sustainably operating the Willamette Falls Locks, which significantly impact the recreational, tourism and commercial economy of the region and provide a non-roadway mode of transportation that may be crucial for recovery after the projected Cascadia 9.0 seismic event. Closure of the Locks since 2011 has placed a severe hardship on commercial, recreational and tribal river users, including long-time employer Wilsonville Concrete, Inc., and Marine Industrial Construction, LLC, which used the Willamette Falls Locks for 129 years of commerce.

The City of Wilsonville respectfully urges a DO PASS vote on HB 2564. Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Julie Fitzgerald". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Julie Fitzgerald, Mayor
City of Wilsonville