



February 19, 2013

Senate Business and Transportation Committee
RE: Support for SB 260

Mr. Chair and Members of the Committee:

I wish I was able to be present with you today. Unfortunately because of scheduling conflicts I am sending this letter instead. My name is Ron Kaufman and I am the General Manager of Mount Hood Railroad Co.

Mount Hood Railroad is a short line railroad located in the Hood River Valley. It runs 21 miles from downtown Hood River along the Columbia River to the historic town of Parkdale, which is located at the base of Mt. Hood. We offer scenic train excursions as well as provide freight services to local lumber, fruit and propane companies. Mount Hood Railroad was originally constructed in 1906 and was built to service the timber and logging industry. In 1988 we re-established our passenger service line, and in 2011 we transported approximately 60,000 passengers and 500 freight cars.

As you may know, a majority of short line railroads in our state are in a deferred state of maintenance, with few public sources for funding. That is why the *ConnectOregon* program has become so vital for us to obtain funding to better serve our rural community.

We received funding from *ConnectOregon II* in 2007 after a major flood event. Had it not been for the funding, Mount Hood Railroad may have been in abandonment status. The funding was instrumental in keeping our line open for service. We received numerous support letters from various stakeholders including city, county, state and port authority entities, as well as from our tourism trade and all the shippers we serve. The substantial funding through the program allowed us to continue serving our community.

Mount Hood Railroad is a major tourist attraction and a leisure magnet to the Hood River Valley. We play a large role and vital link to our freight customers. Our freight business is likely to continue to grow as truck fuel costs continue to escalate. Moving products by rail can be efficient and competitive for smaller independent companies.

For us to be able to meet these essential goals, it was imperative to upgrade our bridges to meet 286K standards that allow us full participation in the nation's rail freight system. Having modern, well designed bridge structures allow us to handle the increased freight traffic and help protect our railroad from future damage. Mount Hood Railroad was involved in a \$247,314 project to fortify two key bridges under *ConnectOregon IV*, and we are grateful for the opportunity. Mount Hood Railroad is a member of the Oregon Rail Users' League (ORULE).

Please vote yes on Senate Bill 260. Thank you for your consideration.

Ron Kaufman
General Manager
Mount Hood Railroad Co.
Office: (541) 716-4449
kaufman@gorge.net