

April 20, 2015

AOC SUPPORTS SENATE BILL 271 ENHANCEMENT OF RAIL SAFETY OVERSIGHT

The safety of our communities is of the utmost importance to the Association of Oregon Counties (AOC). Therefore, AOC fully supports SB 271, an enhancement of ODOT's rail safety program.

By increasing the maximum assessment that ODOT may levy on railroads operating in Oregon from 0.35 percent to 0.50 percent of gross Oregon railroad revenue, a minimal amount, ODOT will be able to defray the cost of its rail safety program. The increased revenues will enable the Rail and Public Transit Division to pay the cost of additional staffing devoted to inspecting rail freight equipment and facilities.

SB 271 would also bring Oregon into compliance with federal requirements for a state Rail Fixed Guideway Safety Oversight Program (49 U.S.C. 5329). Compliance with federal requirements will qualify ODOT to continue to receive federal funds to defray the cost of ODOT's oversight program as it applies to TriMet and the City of Portland. This may free up funds for other areas of the state. In addition, it will ensure that Oregon transit systems will continue to receive federal grants; failure to comply could result in the loss of all federal transit dollars coming into Oregon.

By improving the safety of our transportation system and assisting our struggling transit providers, passage of SB 271 will have a positive impact on our economy. We urge your support of SB 271.

Please contact Mary Stern at mstern@ocweb.org for more information about AOC or this issue

