



CITY OF
West Linn

February 15, 2017

Senator Lee Beyer, Chair
Senate Committee on Business and Transportation
Oregon State Legislature
900 Court Street NE, Room 453
Salem, OR 97301

Re: February 15 Committee hearing on SB 256

Dear Senator Beyer and Members of the Committee:

I am writing on behalf of the West Linn City Council to express our strong support for SB 256, which creates a State Commission for the Willamette Falls Locks.

Located within the City of West Linn and completed in 1873, the Willamette Falls Locks are an essential part of the history of our city, this region and the entire state. Unfortunately the Locks were placed in caretaker status in 2011 because of structural safety concerns, preventing usage of the facility. However, if repaired and reopened the Locks could once again serve as a resource for local tribes, an economic advantage for businesses up and down the river, and a recreational and tourist destination for Oregonians and visitors. West Linn is working with our citizens, tribal representatives, surrounding cities, businesses and many others to revitalize the Willamette Falls area. We believe that a functioning locks system is critical to that work and our future.

SB 256 represents the final recommendation by the Willamette Falls Locks State Task Force established under SB 131 in 2015. Convened by Governor Barbara Roberts and facilitated by Oregon Solutions, the State Task Force recommendation includes the creation of a State Commission to serve as a policy-making and advisory body on issues related to the future of the Locks and their status with the USACE. The Commission will be tasked with evaluating the repairs needed to reopen the Locks, advocating for those repairs together with USACE and identifying potential transferees and future governance for the Locks.

A State Commission would also ensure the USACE understands the value and interest of the Willamette Falls Locks to our State and our citizens by providing a high level, unified government-to-government relationship with USACE.

Creation of a State Commission for the Willamette Falls Locks will help secure a better future for all of the communities along the Willamette River and for the entire state. **We urge a "yes" vote on SB 256.** Thank you for your time on this issue.

Sincerely,

Russell B. Axelrod
Mayor, City of West Linn