

SB 256 STAFF MEASURE SUMMARY

Senate Committee On Business and Transportation

Prepared By: Patrick Brennan, LPRO Analyst

Sub-Referral To: Joint Committee On Ways and Means

Meeting Dates: 2/15

WHAT THE MEASURE DOES:

Establishes the Willamette Falls Locks Commission as a policy-making and advisory board for issues related to the repair, reopening, operation, maintenance and future transfer of ownership of the Willamette River navigational channel and locks system. Establishes the Willamette Falls Navigation Infrastructure Program to provide staff support and assistance to the Commission. Establishes the Willamette Falls Navigation Infrastructure Program Account and appropriates \$677,500 from the General Fund into the Account. Sunsets all three programs on December 1, 2023. Declares emergency, effective on passage.

NOTE: MEASURE HAS A SUBSEQUENT REFERRAL TO JOINT WAYS AND MEANS

ISSUES DISCUSSED:

EFFECT OF AMENDMENT:

No amendment.

BACKGROUND:

The historic Willamette Falls locks were constructed in the early 1870s to allow river traffic to navigate around the 40-foot, horseshoe-shaped basalt ridge between Oregon City and West Linn on the Willamette River. The locks opened in 1873 and passed through the hands of numerous owners before being purchased by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in 1915. The locks were placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1974, and were declared non-operational in December 2011.

Each of the system's four locks is approximately 210 feet long and 40 feet wide. When in operation, the locks varied in lift distance from 20.5 feet (Lock #1, the farthest downstream) to 9.3 feet (Lock #4, the farthest upstream).