



# Metro

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**Metro Council President Tom Hughes**

February 14, 2017

The Honorable Senator Lee Beyer, Chair  
Senate Committee on Business and Transportation  
Oregon State Capitol  
900 Court St, NE  
Salem, OR 97301

Dear Senator Beyer:

The Metro Council supports Senate Bill 256, which creates a State Commission for the Willamette Falls Locks.

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 U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE). SB 256 ensures that the USACE understands the value and interest of the Willamette Falls Locks to our State and citizens by providing a high level of engagement and unified government-to-government relations.

The Willamette Falls Locks were placed in caretaker status in 2011 because of structural safety concerns, preventing future usage of the facility. Since the reduction of logging in Oregon, usage of the Willamette Falls Locks reduced to a threshold, struggling nationally to compete for USACE funding. USACE is currently conducting a Final Disposition Study to determine how best to remove the facility from their inventory. In anticipation of this decision, the State Commission will be tasked with evaluating the repairs needed to reopen the Locks, advocating for those repairs together with the Corps and identifying potential transferees for the Locks.

At the heart of the State-designated Willamette Falls Heritage Area, the Locks represent a significant piece of Oregon's history. Completed in 1873, the reopening of the Locks complements the redevelopment and public access intended for the Legacy site on the Oregon City side of the Falls. Additionally, the Locks could once again serve as a historic resource for local tribes, an economic advantage for local businesses, and a recreational attraction for the state's many visitors, all while marketing the broader story of settlement and industrial growth in Oregon.

**On behalf of the Metro Council, I urge a "yes" vote for SB 256.**

Sincerely,

Tom Hughes  
Metro Council President