

HB 2564 STAFF MEASURE SUMMARY

Joint Committee On Transportation

Prepared By: Patrick Brennan, LPRO Analyst

Meeting Dates: 2/11

WHAT THE MEASURE DOES:

Establishes the Willamette Falls Locks Authority as a public corporation. Modifies the duties of the Willamette Falls Locks Commission and sunsets the Commission on June 30, 2022. Declares emergency, effective on passage.

ISSUES DISCUSSED:

EFFECT OF AMENDMENT:

No amendment.

BACKGROUND:

The Willamette Falls Canal was constructed in the 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. In 1915, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers purchased the locks; the locks were placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1974. The locks were deemed non-operational in December 2011. Senate Bill 131 (2015) established the Willamette Falls Locks Task Force to gather information related to the locks, including their current and potential future value. In 2017, Senate Bill 256 created the Willamette Falls Locks Commission, the Willamette Falls Navigation Infrastructure Program, and the Willamette Falls Navigation Infrastructure Program Account.

A public corporation is an entity created by the state to carry out a public mission and provide public services. They are usually granted increased operating flexibility compared to a government entity, while retaining the principles of public accountability. Each is led by a board of directors appointed by the Governor and confirmed by the Senate, and typically is delegated authority by the creating legislation to set policy and manage operations.

House Bill 2564 establishes the Willamette Falls Locks Authority as a public corporation consisting of between seven and eleven members. The Authority is directed to appoint an executive director. Its primary purpose is to establish and exercise operational authority over the Willamette Falls Locks project and its associated properties and facilities. As part of this mission, the Authority may create a tax-exempt entity, issue and sell revenue bonds, and enter into financing agreements.