

February 11, 2021

MMC

Metropolitan Mayors' Consortium

Mayor Lacey Beaty

City of Beaverton

Mayor Brian Hodson

City of Canby

Mayor Jeffrey Dalin

City of Cornelius

Mayor Gery Schirado

City of Durham

Mayor Brian Cooper

City of Fairview

Mayor Peter Truax

City of Forest Grove

Mayor Tammy Stempel

City of Gladstone

Mayor Travis Stovall

City of Gresham

Mayor Tom Ellis

City of Happy Valley

Mayor Steve Callaway

City of Hillsboro

Mayor Ken Gibson

City of King City

Mayor Joe Buck

City of Lake Oswego

Mayor Mark Hardie

City of Maywood Park

Mayor Mark Gamba

City of Milwaukie

Mayor Teri Lenahan

City of North Plains

Mayor Ted Wheeler

City of Portland

Mayor Walt Williams

City of Rivergrove

Mayor Keith Mays

City of Sherwood

Mayor Jason Snider

City of Tigard

Mayor Randy Lauer

City of Troutdale

Mayor Frank Bubenik

City of Tualatin

Mayor Anne McEnery-Ogle

City of Vancouver (ex officio)

Mayor Jules Walters

City of West Linn

Mayor Julie Fitzgerald

City of Wilsonville

Mayor Scott Harden

City of Wood Village

Representative Susan McLain, Co-Chair
Senator Lee Beyer, Co-Chair
Joint Transportation Committee
Oregon State Legislature

Re: Support for HB 2564

Dear Co-Chair McLain, Co-Chair Beyer and Members of the Committee,

The Metropolitan Mayors' Consortium (MMC) represents the mayors of twenty-five cities in the Portland Metro Area, collectively home to over 1.7 million Oregonians. The MMC writes to express its support for HB 2564.

As outlined in the ECONorthwest report, "Economic Benefits of Reopening the Willamette Falls Locks" issued in 2018, there are numerous quantified economic benefits to reopening the Locks and reconnecting the lower and upper reaches of the Willamette River. The benefits for transportation alone are conservatively demonstrated in the amount of \$12-\$49 million over the next 30 years. During that time period, 80,000 to 220,000 truck trips would be removed from congested Portland area roads, with reductions of 11,000-32,000 metric tons of CO2. These conservative estimates are based on assumptions that no commodities other than aggregate would move through the Locks. In all likelihood, a regular schedule of operations would encourage other business that produce and transport goods and commodities to take advantage of barging through the Locks, in part because of our overly congested roadway system. Additionally, there is a critical shortage of moorage sites for commercial vessels on the river, and reopening the Locks would provide access to desired moorage sites above the Falls for commercial vessels in the future.

The recreation and tourism benefits from reopening the Locks are also conservatively quantified by ECONorthwest, ranging from \$12-50 million over the next 30 years. The Willamette Water Trail is one of only 20 National Water Trails in the U.S., extending 187 miles and linking the communities and cities along the river. Guided day trips and hotel barge cruises to Newberg and Oregon's wine country can be expected, based on modeling from European operations of similar cruises and the revenue generated from them, and from public testimony to the Commission from the cruise ship industry.

Redevelopment impacts would certainly benefit the sites adjacent to the Locks, and all riverfront sites along the Willamette River would also benefit from a reopened Locks. When considered together with the Willamette Falls Legacy Project on the Oregon City side of the Falls, the combined impacts for redevelopment in the area are enormous. Additionally, redevelopment sites in Wilsonville and Newberg are most likely to capitalize on the potential benefits from a reopened Locks.

The Locks are of significant historical and cultural value to Native American tribes and Oregonians, and they have significant engineering importance. In 1974, the Locks were listed on the National Register of Historic Places, and in 1991 listed as a State Historic Civil Engineering Landmark. The National Trust for Historic Preservation declared the Locks a National Treasure in 2012. The Locks are an iconic feature of the State Heritage Area that combine with the natural beauty of the Falls and surrounding area and create a draw for cultural and historic tourism.

The Willamette Falls Locks are also an important link for river communities, connecting Oregon's most populated region to the Willamette Valley's thriving wine valley and heritage area. The potential for local economic redevelopment for communities along the Willamette River, and for tourism and recreation, promise new energy for some of Oregon's most popular destinations in the Willamette Valley and enrich the travel options we boast in Oregon. Finally, the Locks serve as a life-saving emergency transportation and operations route in the event of a severe Cascadia earthquake.

Ensuring the Willamette remains one river from its headwaters south of Eugene to its mouth in Portland is critical to our cities both individually and collectively. We urge the Joint Transportation Committee to move us one step closer to the reopening of the Willamette Falls Locks by passing HB 2564.

Sincerely,

The Metropolitan Mayors' Consortium