



Oregon Trail Electric Cooperative  
4005 23<sup>rd</sup> St. Baker City, OR 97814  
541-523-3616  
[www.otec.coop](http://www.otec.coop)

March 6, 2025

Oregon Trail Electric Cooperative

Testimony, HB 2527

House Committee on Economic Development and Small Business, and Trade

Chair Nguyen, Vice-Chairs Bynum and Diehl,

My name is Peggy Browne, and I am the Manager of Government Affairs for Oregon Trail Electric Cooperative (OTEC). OTEC is a member-owned and governed electric cooperative that serves nearly 60,000 residents in Baker, Grant, Harney and Union counties in Eastern Oregon.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony in support of HB 2527 which will facilitate water and sewer services to the Union County Fairgrounds in La Grande, Oregon. OTEC supports this bill for multiple reasons. First and foremost, the funding will facilitate the first steps to establish a baseline of critical infrastructure necessary for basic core emergency capabilities at the local level. The fairgrounds will be the only facility in Union County that will provide adequate evacuation shelter and staging area for firefighters in the event of a catastrophic wildfire. This specific site is especially critical for evacuation needs of our rural area where most rural residents have large animals, vehicles, and trailers. Additional benefits of water and sewer at the fairgrounds includes:

- Ensures a sustainable water supply for future growth, promotes regional collaboration between the City of La Grande, Union County, and the State of Oregon.
- Support growth and generate revenue as an event venue.
- During severe weather events that require counties to open warming, cooling, or air quality shelters, fairgrounds are some of the few, if only locations that local governments have access to for quickly meeting the needs of the community.
- County-owned fairground complexes with the rare combination of large indoor and outdoor spaces, bathrooms, internet, and redundant electrical supply are particularly well-suited for use not only as evacuation sites and points of distribution for supplies, but also for locating incident management teams during critical incidents. Incident management teams require large open spaces, indoor facilities, water supplies and other basic supporting infrastructure that is commonly only found at fair facilities. • County-owned fair complexes have a very unique ability to provide adequate traffic handling for drive-through clinics and materials handling to serve as delivery, staging, and distribution sites (caches) for equipment and supplies during and following emergencies.
- Fairground facilities are often needed to support animal welfare enforcement, as local governments often need locations to temporarily house animals for treatment and evidence processing on abuse



# Oregon Trail Electric Cooperative

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

and neglect cases. Privately-owned or operated facilities cannot necessarily be relied on to provide this function.

After conversations with County Commissioners in Union County, it is clear that the Union County Fairgrounds and surrounding communities will benefit from installation of water and wastewater infrastructure. The project is crucial for community resilience and will increase the overall usefulness of the fairgrounds year-round, increasing economic and communal opportunities to OTEC's member-owners. It is OTEC's belief that the funding in HB 2527 has the potential to increase the quality of life for our member-owners living in Union County.

OTEC encourages your support of HB 2527. Do not hesitate to contact our Director of Member Services, Lea Hoover at 541-519-0071 or [lhoover@otec.coop](mailto:lhoover@otec.coop) with any questions about OTEC's support for this bill.

Sincerely,

*Peggy S. Browne*

Peggy Browne

Manager of Government Affairs  
Oregon Trail Electric Cooperative



# Oregon Trail Electric Cooperative

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 