

SB 1591 STAFF MEASURE SUMMARY

Senate Committee On Transportation

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Meeting Dates: 2/9

WHAT THE MEASURE DOES:

The measure directs the Oregon Business Development Department to study the establishment of a Port of Central Oregon. The measure specifies recommendations the study must include, such as establishing geographic boundaries, foreign trade zones, and ownership of existing infrastructure. The study would be due to an interim legislative committee on economic development by September 15, 2027.

Fiscal impact: May have fiscal impact, but no statement yet issued

Revenue impact: May have revenue impact, but no statement yet issued

ISSUES DISCUSSED:

EFFECT OF AMENDMENT:

No amendment.

BACKGROUND:

Oregon currently has 23 ports, all of which are located along or near the Pacific Ocean or Columbia River. Central Oregon, as covered by this bill and the Central Oregon Area Commission on Transportation, includes Crook, Deschutes, and Jefferson Counties, and does not have a port. According to the Portland State University Population Research Center, these three counties had an estimated total population of over 267,000 in 2025, up by about 20,000 from the 2020 Census.

Highway 97 is the primary north-south route through this region and connects with Highways 20 and 26 here, and to Interstate 84 farther north. The highway is paralleled by a Class I railroad, and the Oregon Freight Plan notes that Roberts Field in Redmond has measurable air-cargo shipment volumes. The plan also notes that forest and wood products; and clay, minerals, and stone make up the highest shares of production and consumption tonnage in this region, while the highest share of value is seen in the machinery, instruments, transportation equipment, and metals; and food or kindred product commodity groups.

A port in this region would constitute an inland port, one which supplies a region with an intermodal terminal or merging point for different modes of transportation such as air, rail, and truck. Such ports can include a foreign trade zone, where customs procedures allow for domestic activity involving foreign items before formal customs entry, and some items are afforded duty-free treatment. Chapter 777 of Oregon statute covers ports and their powers, while Chapter 778 grants some exceptions and additional powers to the Port of Portland.