



Oregon

Tina Kotek, Governor

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Chair Golden, Vice Chair Girod, Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on SB 679. For the record, I am Chris Havel, Deputy Director of Oregon Parks and Recreation Department (OPRD). OPRD has no position on SB 679.

This bill would add an additional \$1 million in general fund to continue development of the Oregon Coast Trail.

The Oregon Coast Trail (OCT) runs the length of Oregon's 362-mile coastline from the Columbia River to the California border. Hikers cross sandy beaches, meander through forest-shaded corridors, traverse majestic headlands and pass through 28 coastal communities.

Around half of the route is on the beach, about a quarter is on trail segments that wind through state parks or public lands, and the remaining quarter is on US101, county roads or city streets. About ten percent of the trail is disconnected, inconvenient, unsafe, or inaccessible – mainly where the current route requires people to hike on the shoulder of U.S. 101 or where it interacts with county roads and local streets. Additionally, the with the dynamic weather environment and shifting geology on the coast, completed segments may be closed for repair after storms or landslides.

As envisioned, the Oregon Coast Trail will become a thru-hiking attraction for traditional backpackers as well as a signature trail-to-town experience that includes access to multiple public and private transportation options, a range of lodging and dining opportunities and exceptional outdoor experiences led by local guides and outfitters.

In 2017, HB 3149 directed OPRD to develop an action plan for closing gaps in the trail particularly where the trail relies on walking on Highway 101 and other roads. OPRD partnered with the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), Association of Oregon Counties (AOC), and Oregon Solutions to develop the action plan. The OCT Action Plan will guide improvements, maintenance, and management of the OCT with an emphasis on connecting existing gaps along the trail. The action planning effort is slated to be completed in mid-2023 and work will continue through a land-owners cooperative and a technical committee. This type of project cannot be accomplished by one agency alone, it will take the multijurisdictional cooperation of multiple state agencies, along with our tribal, federal, local, and non-profit partners.

If additional funding were available for the OCT, OPRD would likely look for opportunities to fund projects like:

- Building new trail segments on ODOT Right of Way for a safer route;
- Acquiring additional property needed to redirect trail to a safer route;
- Developing new trail segments;
- Hiring a limited duration OCT Project Manager;
- Updating signage to make current trail clearer; and
- Adding primitive campsites for thru-hikers.