

Written Testimony of Timothy Parks

Prepared for the Joint Committee On Ways and Means Subcommittee On Capital Construction

Newport, Oregon

April 14, 2023

***Re: Support for Nehalem River Bridge Pile Restoration
on the Port of Tillamook Bay/Oregon Coast Scenic Railroad***

My name is Tim Parks, I am a Disabled U.S. Army Veteran and A Volunteer train crew member of the Oregon Coast Scenic Railroad located in Tillamook County. I Currently Reside in Bend Oregon, and Travel frequently to Tillamook County to support operations of the Oregon Coast Scenic Railroad. I have been a volunteer with the railroad since 2018, and since then I have personally witnessed and experienced a significant increase in the amount of people who have specifically visited Tillamook County to experience the historical train rides and enjoy the wonderful sights and sounds of the Oregon Coast that the railroad has to offer them. Supporting the appropriation of these funds will not only save a piece of Tillamook County history, but will allow visitors and residents to continue enjoying the beautiful scenery in locations only accessible by the train.

I have prepared this testimony to respectfully pursue your support for a \$750,000 appropriation to restore the piling under the 2nd Crossing of the Nehalem River Railroad Bridge near Mohler in Tillamook County, as requested through Tillamook County legislators Senator Weber and Representative Javadi.

This project will restore several miles of railroad access up the Nehalem River Valley and would result in numerous benefits, including:

- **Wildfire Prevention/Suppression** - OCSR's 40,000-gallon firefighting train will be able to access further up the Nehalem Valley to help with firefighting efforts in heavily forested areas, including areas of state forest. OCSR already works closely with several fire departments regarding the deployment of the train under red flag conditions. It is for this reason that the project has received the support of the Nehalem Bay Fire District and other local firefighting agencies.
- **Economic Impact** - The project is anticipated to have a significant economic impact to the county with a benefit of around \$300,000 per year once fully completed, and will also open the door to further economic growth by enabling other projects further up the rail line to happen that would provide another \$200,000 per year in economic impact. These benefits primarily arise from Oregon Coast Scenic Railroad and Twins Ranch Railriders increasing tourist numbers through new programs, with the result of increased retail sales, restaurant visitation, and overnight stays in Tillamook County.
- **Trail and Accessibility Benefits** – The Nehalem Valley is planned to be a dual rail/trail corridor and OCSR is working with the Salmonberry Trail Foundation to ensure this bridge is dual mode compatible. This dual-purpose design also allows for greater access by the public to the

Nehalem Valley than previously possible, for example people with ADA considerations that may have struggled with a trail for a long distance can explore further by utilizing a train/trail combination.

- **River Health** – There are currently environmental concerns as the Nehalem River Bridge is in danger of failing should storm debris impact the degraded pilings and break them, potentially causing.

One big strength of this project is that it is shovel ready. Oregon Coast Scenic Railroad has already had the necessary engineering completed at its own expense, has started conversations regarding permitting with the Army Corps of Engineers, Environmental Protection Agency, and National Marine Fisheries. This means that the work could be completed in a single season once funding is secured.

The bulk of the construction work was quoted at \$813,000 in March of 2023, accounting for prevailing wages, with the estimated total cost, including contingency, being \$910,000. Oregon Coast Scenic Railroad, a 501(c)(3) non-profit heritage group, is providing \$160,000 from its budget towards the project, giving approximately an 18% match.

This project has the potential to bring great economic growth to an underserved and rural area of our wonderful state. Not only that, but it will also help preserve our natural resources against the ever-increasing threat of wildfire that has become so present in recent summers, bringing benefits well beyond Tillamook County. It is therefore of no surprise that the project has the support of Nehalem Bay Fire District; the Tillamook Coast Visitors Association; the City of Wheeler, the Port of Garibaldi, the Port of Tillamook Bay; and many others.

With that said, I hope that you will seriously consider this funding request and thank you for your time and consideration in this matter.

Sincerely,

Tim Parks

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tim Parks', written in a cursive style.