



HELICOPTER
TRANSPORT
SERVICES
LLC

February 13, 2025

Senate Committee on Veterans, Emergency Management, Federal and World Affairs

Re; Testimony in support of SCR 2 as originally proposed.

Committee Chair Manning and fellow committee members,

My name is Robert Fournier, I am the Chief Pilot and Director of Flight Operations at Helicopter Transport Services based at KUAO, Aurora State Airport. I wanted to share with you some information on our company background and our Infrastructure that is in place at the Aurora State Airport.

Helicopter Transport Services maintains our US Headquarters at KUAO. This state-of-the-art Aircraft Support Facility was built around twelve years ago, and it is purpose built to withstand the Cascadia Subduction Event. It is a 220,000 square foot hanger and aircraft maintenance facility complete with 8 concrete helipads on 11 acres. We have a fleet of eleven super heavy lift Sikorsky CH 54 Skycrane Helicopters, and four Sikorsky S-61 Helicopters based at this location. We have approximately 140 highly trained Aircraft Technicians, Pilots and Support Staff employed at this location to support our aircraft and operation.

Our company, Helicopter Transport Services LLC, was founded in 1976. We started our flight operations in support of the survey and construction of the largest Hydro Electric project in North America, James Bay one and two. We continue the mission of critical infrastructure construction and support to this day and have done countless disaster restoration projects that have restored power to the grid after major natural disasters. A few notable examples include the January 1998 ice storm in Quebec that took out 40% of the Electric Grid in Eastern Canada. Another example was our participation in the restoration of the Puerto Rico Power Grid after hurricane Maria in 2017. Additionally, we have done hurricane restoration in all Southeastern United States, being the approved and preferred company for Duke Energy in Florida and the Carolinas, Georgia Power, Entergy in Louisiana etc. We have also worked with partners such as Wilson Construction (also based at KUAO) on major power transmission line construction projects. Our Skycranes have unique characteristics that make it an ideal tool for restoring the transmission portion of the power grid quickly. For example, it can lift and precisely set an entire twenty-five-thousand-pound electrical tower in one piece, something no other aircraft do. Our highly trained construction flight crews can also set steel in the same fashion, which could aid in the repair of bridges or other critical infrastructure after an event such as the Cascadia Subduction earthquake.

We have also specialized in Aerial Fire Suppression for almost 50 years. We are in fact the largest supplier of Type 1 Heavy Helicopters and partner with The United States Forest Service and Cal Fire for this critical mission. We have been on the frontline of most of the major firefights you see in the evening news in places throughout the west, including most recently in California. A few years ago, on September 7th, 2020, we were engaged in the fight for the Santiam Canyon just a few miles down the road from the Oregon State Capital Building. Our Skycrane Helicopters, equipped with 2650 Gallon tanks, flew countless fire suppression missions on the Beachie

14497 Keil Rd. NE, Aurora, OR 97002
PHONE 503-776-9300 • FAX 503-776-9304



*HELICOPTER
TRANSPORT
SERVICES
LLC*

Creek and Santiam fires. These types of fires used to be rare in Oregon, but with the effects of climate change and drought they are now a frightening reality and part of our future, similar in threat and scope to the potential Cascadia Subduction Event. During those fires we offered our facility helipads to the Oregon Department of Forestry and the US Forest Service, and we established a Heli-base at KUAO in support of the incidents. We invited other civilian operators and military aircraft to use our secure helipads and facilities. It worked very well and did not impede any other operations at KUAO while it operated.

I wanted to share the history of our company and facility with you as I believe it is relevant to the spirit of the bill you are proposing. We believe this bill highlights the necessity to have people, a plan and a location selected in the event that the worst-case scenario becomes reality. This bill is about the assets and opportunities presented by a well-equipped, well-maintained group of facilities staffed by competent people in an area that if affected by an event such as the Cascadia Subduction Earthquake, will be ready to help the great people of Oregon during a very difficult time. The Aurora Airport is unique to the State of Oregon, I cannot think of another airport with a mix of companies as tenants that could so seamlessly become one homogeneous team to facilitate disaster relief quickly. In addition to having two heavy lift helicopter companies (HTS and Columbia), two critical infrastructure construction companies (Wilson Construction and Winco), the Portland Gas & Electric helicopter based currently at KUAO, there is also Life Flight, the premier Rotary Wing and Fixed Wing Medivac Transport company in the State of Oregon. Consider all of this is already in place at Aurora State Airport. Additionally, factor in our strategic location adjacent to I5 on the south side of the Boone's Ferry Bridge that has not yet been seismically upgraded, it could be a potential lifeline close to ground zero in the event of the Cascadia Subduction Earthquake that will be relatively intact and able to function in the immediate emergency response.

I would ask you consider the Resiliency Study that was prepared for the Oregon Department of Aviation by the Aurora Airport Improvement Association. It outlines in detail the capabilities, resources available and commitment of private industry at Aurora State Airport.

On behalf of Helicopter Transport Services, let it be known that we fully support SCR 2 in its original form, not the -1 Amendment.

Robert Fournier
Chief Pilot & Director of Flight Operations
Helicopter Transport Services LLC