



**Testimony by City of Wilsonville Mayor Shawn O’Neil Supporting HB 2574:**

***Proposed Legislation Advances Re-Opening of Willamette Falls Locks to Improve River Transportation and Economic Development Opportunities***

Scheduled for public hearing on April 1, 2025, before the  
Joint Committee On Transportation

Co-Chairs Gorsek and McLain, and Members of the Committee:

I am testifying on behalf of the City of Wilsonville in support of HB 2574, which authorizes actions of the Willamette Falls Locks Authority to act as a public corporation and provides the second portion of a State match of \$11.4 million in lottery bonds to implement repairs that advance reopening of the Locks.

Repairing the Locks to resume riverboat traffic on the Willamette River has been a coordinated, joint federal-state-local effort ever since 2011 when the Locks were closed. The initial, first State investment of HB 2564 in 2021 appropriated \$7.25 million in lottery funds to match federal funds of \$14 million and local governments support of more than \$750,000.

Creation of the Willamette Falls Locks Authority as a State public corporation was the first step in facilitating the ownership transfer of the Locks from the federal government via the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (US ACE ) to the State of Oregon. Federal and state funds to repair the Locks, transfer of the ownership of the Locks and a state/regional commitment to long-term maintenance were essential to reopening the Locks to river travel.

The City of Wilsonville is one of three Willamette River cities appointed by the legislature to serve on the Willamette Falls Locks Commission created by SB 256 of 2017. Wilsonville has vested interests along with other public- and private-sector stakeholders in reopening and sustainably operating the Locks, which significantly impact the recreational, tourism and commercial economy of the region, and provide a non-roadway mode of transportation crucial for recovery after the projected Cascadia 9.0 seismic event.

Closure of the Locks since 2011 has placed a severe hardship on commercial, recreational and tribal river users, including precipitating relocation of long-time Wilsonville employer Marine Industrial Construction, LLC, which used the Locks for 129 years of commerce. However, tourism operators such as Portland Spirit have expressed an interest in using the Locks to conduct ‘Wine Country’ excursions upriver to Wilsonville and Newberg.

The City of Wilsonville urges a Do-Pass vote on HB 2574. Thank you.

Shawn O’Neil, Mayor  
City of Wilsonville