

SB 1035 -1 STAFF MEASURE SUMMARY

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

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Meeting Dates: 3/13, 4/1

WHAT THE MEASURE DOES:

The measure establishes a pilot program for firefighting purposes at the Burns Municipal and La Grande/Union County Airports, directing the Oregon Department of Emergency Management (OEM) to maintain specified vehicle fleets. Unspecified amounts are appropriated to OEM for the fleets, and for grants to upgrade airport fuel storage capacities.

Fiscal impact: Fiscal impact issued

Revenue impact: Revenue impact issued

Detailed Summary

Establishes a pilot program for firefighting purposes. Defines pilot program airports (PPA) as including the Burns Municipal Airport and La Grande/Union County Airport. Directs the Oregon Department of Emergency Management (OEM) to maintain fleets at these airports containing:

- Vehicles capable of transporting aviation fuel, including Jet A and low lead fuels;
- Vehicles appropriate for transporting aviation personnel, including pilots and crew members; and
- Airport refuel trucks capable of transferring fuel from storage to aircraft.

Directs OEM to stage vehicles at locations augmenting firefighting resources at PPAs, and to contract with PPA owners or operators to govern the use of the vehicles. Permits OEM to adopt administrative rules for the program. Appropriates unspecified amount for the pilot program.

Adds authority relating to conflagrations to the existing emergency authority of the Director of Transportation to suspend operation of specified statutes involving motor carriers for the purpose of expediting movement of persons or property, and allows such suspensions to apply to geographic areas other than where the emergency or conflagration occurs if doing so is necessary to address the emergency or conflagration.

Authorizes the Oregon National Guard and Oregon Civil Defense Force to transport aviation fuel if the OEM Director determines there are insufficient commercial carriers.

Directs OEM to issue grants to owners or operators of PPAs for capital projects to increase aviation fuel storage capacity, who submit plans for OEM approval. Appropriates unspecified amount for fuel storage upgrades; repeals these provisions January 2, 2029.

Effective on the 91st day after sine die.

ISSUES DISCUSSED:

- Budget limitations in the General Fund
- Potential use of aviation fuel tax revenue as a source of funding
- Cost of upgrades at these airports

EFFECT OF AMENDMENT:

-1 The amendment allows the Oregon Department of Emergency Management (OEM) to hire and contract for personnel to manage and operate the vehicle fleets and grant program. It appropriates \$2,180,000 for the vehicle

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fleet and \$240,000 for the grant program. It establishes the Pilot Program Airport Fund (PPAF) in the State Treasury, which consists of moneys appropriated to the Fund and interest earned. Moneys in the Fund are continually appropriated to OEM for the grant program, and OEM may use up to \$48,000 for management and administration of the grant program. The grant program and PPAF are repealed on January 2, 2029, and any remaining moneys in the PPAF are transferred to the General Fund.

BACKGROUND:

The Burns Municipal Airport is a general aviation airport owned by the City of Burns, located east of the city. In 2021, the airport recorded 8,295 operations. The airport also serves as a Bureau of Land Management (BLM) wildland firefighting base. The La Grande/Union County Airport, located southeast of the City of La Grande, is a general aviation airport and handles roughly 15,500 annual operations. Aviation fuel sales and leases of buildings and land fund airport operations. Fire retardant aircraft use the airport during the summer, and the United States Forest Service (USFS) has a fire center and retardant base at the airport.

During the 2024 wildfire season, the Durkee Fire burned an area larger than Multnomah County in Baker and Malheur Counties. Other wildfires also burned in various areas of eastern Oregon. Governor Kotek declared a statewide wildfire emergency and deployed the National Guard to some of these fires. Governor Kotek also invoked the Emergency Conflagration Act 17 times in 2024; the Act allows the State Fire Marshal to mobilize firefighting resources to local communities.

Senate Bill 1035 establishes a pilot program for firefighting purposes at the Burns Municipal and La Grande/Union County Airports and directs the Oregon Department of Emergency Management (OEM) to maintain specified vehicle fleets at these airports for firefighting purposes.