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House passes legislation to support local rail, industrial job growth

Rep. Caddy McKeown champions bill to help reinvest in the Coos Bay rail line

SALEM—Today the Oregon House of Representatives passed legislation that will support industrial job growth on the south coast. House Bill 3276 clarifies that property within the Coos Bay rail line corridor, which was incorporated into the Oregon International Port of Coos Bay district by legislative action in 2011, is not subject to ad valorem property taxation, or taxes based on the value of the real estate. This bill helps ensure the Port, a public entity, is able to continue reinvesting in local infrastructure that is critical for many local industries.

“Reinvestment in the Coos Bay rail line is imperative,” said Rep. Caddy McKeown (D-Coos Bay), chief sponsor of HB 3276. “Freight rail service is critical to the success of our local economies. I am pleased to champion this legislation to allow the Port to continue to invest every possible dollar in further rehabilitation and improvement.”

Freight rail connections are vital to the economies of Coos, western Douglas and western Lane counties. The region has seen renewed industrial job growth in recent years, thanks in part to Port and Coos Bay Rail Link investments. Steel fabricator American Bridge Manufacturing in Reedsport – a company that ships large structural component by rail through the Western U.S. – has expanded its workforce over the past 18 months from 10 workers to 60 as a result of the re-establishment of connections to the North American rail system.

The Port has worked since 2011 to restore freight service on the 134-mile rail line that spans from Coquille to Eugene, investing \$31 million in track rehabilitation. In order to meet new Federal Railroad Administration standards, the port anticipates more than \$60 million in additional repairs to bridges and water crossings. House Bill 3276 will help ensure this critical rehabilitation work moves forward.

HB 3276 now moves to the desk of Senate President Peter Courtney for committee referral.

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