

AGENDA ITEM FOR ADMINISTRATIVE MEETING

() Discussion only

(X) Action

FROM (DEPT/ DIVISION): County Counsel

SUBJECT: Columbia Rail Project

Background:

The county has been asked to provide a letter of support for a grant application for Columbia Rail project for rail improvements to add 2,500 feet of new siding track near Spofford and new switches in Milton-Freewater.

Requested Separation Actions:

Approve support letter for grant application by Columbia Rail

ATTACHMENTS: Letter of Support

*****For Internal Use Only*****

Checkoffs:

- () Dept. Heard (copy)
() Human Resources (copy)
(X) Legal (copy)
() (Other - List:)

To be notified of Meeting:

Needed at Meeting:

Scheduled for meeting on: November 10, 2021

Action taken:

Follow-up:

John Boren
Freight Program Manager
Connect Oregon
Oregon Department of Transportation
Salem, Oregon

October 28, 2021

RE: 2021 CONNECT OREGON Grant

Dear Mr. Boren:

Umatilla County Commissioners submit this letter of support for Columbia Rail's Connect Oregon grant application for improvements on the Weston, Oregon short line. If this rail line can be improved, it will assist in the safety, efficiencies and increase economic development opportunity in this area of our county.

The main rail line is adjacent to the Spofford, Oregon grain facility (operated by Northwest Grain Growers), and the proposed project would add 2,500 feet of new siding track. Two new switches would be installed at this location as well. This would greatly improve the capacity of the rail line to move grain, and to "spot" cars when not in operation. While this work is not within Milton-Freewater's boundary, it would allow for customers located within the city to move their products in an expedited manner, and not have to worry about a grain train occupying the main track.

Additionally, the scope of work has two new switches being installed within the City of Milton-Freewater. The existing switches, like the much of the rest of this rail line, is antiquated and in need of replacement. Adding a switch here will allow a siding to now be "double-ended".

If successful, Umatilla County will participate, at a broad level, in the design and placement of these rail improvements. Additionally, it is critical to ensure environmental impacts are mitigated and cultural resources protected. Most importantly that transportation on this section of railroad becomes a safer endeavor for both rail and non-rail parties.

This project will be a smart investment in partnership, forward-looking innovation, and addressing long-standing safety, and access that affects our county. If successful, it will provide a foundation for the development and evolution of a safer transportation network. We fully support Columbia Rail as they seek Connect Oregon resources for this critical project. Thank you for considering their Connect Oregon grant application.

Sincerely,