

Port of Tillamook Bay Railroad

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UPDATE!

From Robert H. (Bob) Van Borssum, Port Director
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Port issues RFP

On March 4, 2008 the Board of Commissioners of the Port of Tillamook Bay approved the Request for Proposals for Engineering & Environmental Service for the 2008 Repair and Restoration of the Port of Tillamook Bay Railroad damaged by the December, 2007 storm event. The RFP was published on March 12, 2008.

The Port is working closely with the Federal Emergency Management Agency, which has allocated funds for this phase. The RFP requires that proposals from qualified firms be turned in no later than noon on Wednesday, March 26, 2008.

Economic Impact Study

On Feb. 25, the Port of Tillamook Bay invited approximately 25 local stakeholders to a meeting to gather information about the economic impact of the railroad on Tillamook County. The session was led by OSU economist Bruce Sorte, who will produce a report on his findings. Participating in the meeting were representatives of local industries, regional offices of key state agencies and local economic development representatives.

Since the meeting, Sorte has been scheduling follow-up meetings with key stakeholders and business leaders to get more in-depth information. He will be merging his data into a standard economic model and is expected to produce his final report before the end of March. It is expected to quantify both the current and potential future impact of the railroad on Tillamook County's economy.

More community support

In the past two weeks, local agencies and organizations have continued to voice their support for restoration of the Port of Tillamook Bay Railroad.

On Wednesday, March 12, the Tillamook County Board of Commissioners issued a resolution which stated, in part:

"The Port of Tillamook Bay Railroad is the sole provider of cost-effective transportation of timber, grain products and raw materials both to and from Tillamook County.

"The industries served by the Port of Tillamook Bay Railroad are among the largest employers in Tillamook County...

A periodic publication of Port of Tillamook Bay Railroad reporting ongoing activities in the wake of the storm of December 2007, which damaged and shut down the railroad.

"Without a speedy restoration of an affordable means of shipping heavy industrial material into and out of Tillamook County, the core components of our local economy could be irreparably damaged, threatening the county's family-wage jobs and the quality of life for everyone.

"While it is important for every option to be given fair consideration, it is self-evident there be a cost-effective means of getting materials into and out of Tillamook County in order to maintain an economically viable culture. With today's fuel prices ever on the rise and the addition of heavy truck traffic on our highways and already fragile county road system, the presence of the Port of Tillamook Bay Railroad system remains a critical transportation system component. The longer it takes to restore the railroad, the greater the negative impact to our local economy."

In addition, in the past 10 days, similar letters of support have been received from the Board of Commissioners of the Port of Nehalem, the City Council of the City of Rockaway Beach, the Tillamook County Pioneer Association and the Oregon Coast Scenic Railroad.

From the Port Director

As the Port continues its repair and restoration planning and implementation, I again sincerely thank the Port Board, staff, elected, community and business leaders who continue to provide us much appreciated support and encouragement.

We are preparing to remove storm debris from the rail rights-of-way, which will give work trains unobstructed access to the damaged rail area when the repair and restoration process begins.

As we discuss the project and its future benefits, I wish to underscore the fact that **80 percent of the railroad restoration work done as a result of the 1996 storm event withstood and was undamaged by the wrath of the December, 2007 storm.** As we begin to work on engineering plans for the 2008 repair and restoration of the Port of Tillamook Bay Railroad, our goal is to again incorporate mitigation measures that will minimize or prevent damage from future catastrophic floods.

– Robert H. (Bob) Van Borssum

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CO₂ emissions increased dramatically by closure of POTB Railroad

Restoration of service on the Port of Tillamook Bay Railroad would not only have a positive effect on local shippers and the economy, but also on the environment. Data from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency indicates that the increased truck traffic resulting from the rail closure has dramatically increased CO₂ emissions, a component of global climate change.

The closing of the Port of Tillamook Bay Railroad is adding nearly 300 truck trips into and out of Tillamook County each week, or approximately 15,500 trips annually, to carry freight formerly carried by the train. These trucks travel 75 miles to transfer points in Portland and Salem. The average truck gets a maximum of 6 miles per gallon of diesel fuel, or roughly 12.5 gallons of diesel fuel expended per trip.

According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, a single gallon of diesel fuel contributes 22.2 pounds of CO₂ to the air. Thus, a one-way truck trip of 75 miles would generate 277.5 pounds of CO₂. Multiplied by 15,500 truck trips per year, this equals 4.3 million pounds of CO₂ generated annually by the trucks that will be hauling what was once hauled by the Port of Tillamook Bay Railroad.

It is estimated that trains are from 4 to 9 times more fuel efficient than trucks at distances of less than 100 miles. If we assume that 4/5 of the emissions from trucks could be offset by using rail, that means that switching to trucks from the railroad adds an additional 3.44 million pounds of CO₂ to the atmosphere.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has a carbon calculator on its Web site (<http://www.epa.gov/cleanenergy/energy-resources/calculator.html>). Using that site, it can be determined that 3.44 million pounds of CO₂ is equivalent to any one of the following:

- Annual greenhouse gas emissions from 571,726 passenger vehicles. That is the equivalent of approximately 40 percent of all the passenger cars registered in the state of Oregon.
- Carbon absorbed annually by 709,460 acres of pine or fir forests. That is an area equal to 90 percent of all the forestlands managed by the Oregon Department of Forestry and nearly twice the size of the Tillamook State Forest.
- CO₂ emissions from the electricity use of 413,460 homes for one year. (The City of Portland has approximately 250,000 homes, according to the U.S. Census)
- CO₂ emissions from the energy use of 275,518 homes for one year – more than all the homes within the city of Portland.
- Carbon absorbed by 80 million tree seedlings during their first 10 years of life. (That's as many seedlings as are replanted by Oregon foresters each year.)

- Carbon absorbed annually by 21,773 acres of rainforest preserved from deforestation.
- CO₂ emissions from burning 16,248 railcars' worth of coal.
- Greenhouse gas emissions avoided by recycling 1 million tons of waste instead of sending it to the landfill.
- Annual CO₂ emissions of 0.67 coal-fired power plants.

POTB Railroad has rich history

The rail line that is now the Port of Tillamook Bay Railroad began life thanks to the Pacific Railway and Navigation Co. and is one of the most historic railroads in the Pacific Northwest.

The railroad is 95 miles in length from the Port of Tillamook Bay in Tillamook to Banks, where cars interchange with regional and Class I carriers. Until the storm of December, 2007, the railroad hauled freight six days a week, three days of lumber freight trains from Tillamook to Banks and three days of grain freight trains from Banks to Tillamook. In its early life, the rail line hauled out trees cut by logging crews and brought tourists to the coast.

The line stretches from Tillamook, up the coast to Wheeler, then east through some of the most remote and beautiful areas of the Coast Range. It hugs the mountainsides along the Salmonberry River and incorporates dramatic tunnels, cliff-hugging cuts, river crossings and wooden trestles – some of them 200 feet high. It offers views that are superior to many other tourist-oriented railroads.

Construction on the rail line began in 1906 and, even then, was considered an historic event because of the scale and difficulty of the project. The Salmonberry Canyon stretch was the most challenging to build. The contract for that portion of the work spanned 43 miles of difficult terrain. Engineering experts of the day ranked the railroad among the most complex to construct anywhere in the world.

Eleven tunnels had to be dug by hand – 10 of them within a seven-mile stretch. High-banked streams and deep chasms had to be crossed. Bridges had to be built that were of a height and length sufficient to rank them among the greatest railway bridges of the day. The Salmonberry River was spanned nine times.

After five years of intense labor and hardship, the line was opened in 1911. The PR&N Company lasted until July 1, 1915, when its founder, E.E. Lytle, sold his interests and the line became a Southern Pacific property.

In addition to hauling milled lumber and grain for Tillamook County's dairymen, the Port of Tillamook Bay Railroad has been used extensively by seasonal tourist trains. Some 100,000 riders have ridden the tourist and steam trains since the early 1990s, enjoying coastal scenery and getting a glimpse of a portion of the Tillamook Forest that can be seen no other way.

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