



OREGON LEGISLATIVE POLICY, RESEARCH, & COMMITTEE SERVICES

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October 1998

Proposal: Oregon Department of Aviation

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LC 213, dated 5/21/98, would establish the Oregon Department of Aviation under the supervision and control of a director responsible for the performance of the duties, functions, and powers of the department. The director would be appointed by the Oregon Transportation Commission and serve at the pleasure of the commission, and could be appointed prior to the July 1, 2000 operative date in the proposed legislation. The director must hold a pilot's license and have experience in airport operations or management. The duties, powers, and authority of the director would be subject to policy direction by the commission, and the director would submit an annual report to the commission on the activities of the department.

LC 213 would require the Director of the Department of Transportation to deliver all records, property, unexpended moneys, and employees relating to aviation to the newly established Oregon Department of Aviation. Any disputes regarding transfers of property and employees would be resolved by the Governor, whose decision would be final. The newly created Aviation Department would receive all federal funds paid to the state for aviation programs and services.

Background:

The Oregon Aeronautics Section was founded in 1921 as the first government aviation agency in the United States. The Section's goals were to develop aviation as an integral part of Oregon's transportation network, create and implement strategies to protect and improve Oregon's aviation system, encourage aviation-related economic development, support aviation safety and education, and increase commercial air service and general aviation in Oregon.

The Aeronautics Division was established in 1969 as a division within the newly created Department of Transportation.

1993 legislation authorized the director of the Department of Transportation to reorganize the department, and required the Oregon Transportation Commission to appoint an Aviation Advisory Committee to advise the department on aviation policy matters. The Aviation Advisory Committee consists of nine members who serve four year terms, and are eligible for reappointment. One member is appointed from each congressional district in the state, and the remaining four members are appointed at-large. No more than three committee members may be from any one congressional district.

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Reorganization of the Department of Transportation resulted in the dissolution of the State Aeronautics Division, and the establishment of Aeronautics as a modal section within the Transportation Development Branch.

Aeronautics operates 32 state-owned Oregon airports, and annually licenses or registers more than 400 other public and private airports, heliports, and landing areas. The agency registers all pilots and non-military aircraft based in Oregon, oversees statewide aviation system planning, assists with community airport planning, and conducts aviation safety and public education programs.

Aeronautics activities are funded mainly by user fees. Pilot registration fees are used for air search and rescue missions. State aviation fuel taxes, aircraft registrations, airport licensing fees, and leases and agreements on state-owned airports support other Aeronautics programs. Additional funds come from projects sponsored by the Federal Aviation Administration Airport Improvement Program. Aeronautics receives no state General Fund revenue.

1997 legislation proposed to remove Aeronautics from the Department of Transportation and establish an Oregon Department of Aviation to be overseen by a State Aviation Board created by the bill. The bill was in the Ways and Means Committee upon adjournment sine die.