

Oregon railroad considers options

By Aaron West
The Bulletin

BEND (AP) — Moving thousands of pounds of cargo isn't typically an issue for the trains that use the City of Prineville Railway in Oregon, but what about when the cargo is the train itself?

That's the question the city-owned railroad is trying to answer. Railway Director Matt Wiederholt said railway staff members are considering their options for moving a 30-ton caboose to the Bowman Museum in downtown Prineville. The trip between the railway and the museum is less than a mile — practically nothing compared to the long trips the 70-year-old railway car used to make in its heyday. But since the city's orange caboose will have to be taken off the storage tracks where it currently sits and transported on the highway to make it there, the journey seems a little bit longer than it actually is.

"We're just trying to figure out how to get it down there," Wiederholt said. "Hopefully we'll have it done in the next couple months or so. It's a little challenging, but it's doable."

The caboose, which Wiederholt said the Prineville Railway bought in the 1970s, has seen a lot of use over the years, but it's been out of work for nearly a decade.

Originally used for hauling and housing railroad employees, the caboose is outfitted with a generator, a stove, a desk and bunk beds for the crew members, conductors and brakemen who used to have to travel with a train. When federal safety laws that had required the use of cabooses and large railroad crews were relaxed in the 1980s, Wiederholt said, Prineville's caboose was moved over to the Prineville Freight Junction — via tracks, not the highway — to be used as office space. After that it was used to give kids rides, but it was retired in the mid-2000s.

Rather than let the caboose sit on storage tracks at the railway, where Wiederholt said it would slowly deteriorate, the decision was made to donate it to the city museum. The 100-year anniversary of the railway is coming up in 2018, and Wiederholt said the caboose would make a great historical exhibit at the Bowman Museum.

Which brings the railway staff back to the question at hand: How should they transport the caboose?

The issue isn't actually the freight car's weight, but its height. For a train car, 60,000 pounds is "fairly light," Wiederholt said, but at 13 feet 8 inches tall, the caboose's height would exceed 14 feet — the maximum height allowed on Oregon roads — when it's loaded onto the back of a truck.

Probably what's going to happen, Wiederholt speculated, is that the railway will use a crane it has to lift the caboose so its wheels can be removed and it can be loaded on the back of a lowboy trailer. Then the trip to the museum can be made without smashing into any bridges or power lines.

But what happens when the caboose arrives at the museum is a different matter.

Bowman Museum Director Gordon Gillespie said that since the museum is located in the middle of downtown, it could be a little tricky to get a mobile crane close to where the caboose is slated to be displayed behind the museum.

No-cause evictions ban proposal passes house

By Kristena Hansen
Associated Press

SALEM (AP) — A controversial proposal to ban most no-cause evictions while giving cities the freedom to adopt their own rent-control policies passed the Oregon House Tuesday on a 31-27 vote.

House Bill 2004 now heads to the Senate after weeks of debate between lawmakers, many of whom have been inundated with personal stories of hardship by Oregon tenants and landlords.

The proposal includes a web of exemptions and special circumstances, mostly for the benefit of landlords. But the overall goal is to put a stop to what's become an ongoing narrative of people living month-to-month seeing their rents suddenly spiked or leases abruptly terminated — often displacing them back into a costly rental market.

Democratic Rep. Karin Power, a freshman lawmaker from the Portland suburb of Milwaukie and chief sponsor

of HB 2004, told her colleagues about how a 72-year-old constituent and her husband were evicted three times without cause within the last year and half.

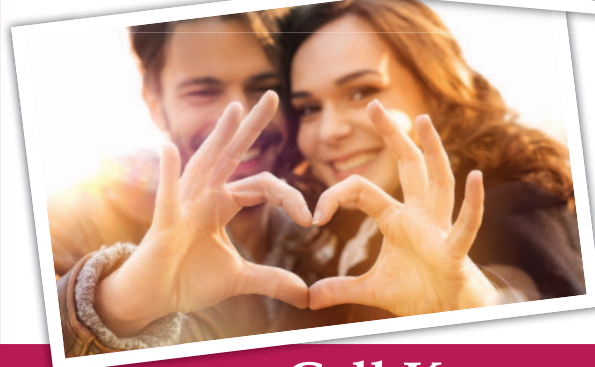
"Rents are sky-rocketing throughout our community," Powers said. "I cannot imagine the stress and anxiety this has caused her, and others like her who have also asked for my help. Each move cuts ever-deeper into their savings."

Under HB 2004, no-cause evictions would be allowed during the first six months, with 30 days' written notice, for tenants living month-to-month.

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