



A STRONG VOICE FOR OREGON'S WORKERS

January 5, 2024

Board of Commissioners, Columbia County
Columbia County Land Development Services
Attn: Planning
230 Strand Street
St. Helens, OR 97051

Re: NEXT Renewable Fuels Local Land Use Permits - Letter of Support

Dear Columbia County Commissioners:

The Oregon AFL-CIO is the statewide federation of labor unions, represents over 300,000 Oregonians in every sector of the economy, and is a proud voice for all workers in the political, legislative, and administrative processes. The Oregon AFL-CIO supports responsible, high-road, development done by highly skilled union members, especially when it helps transition our economy to be less reliant on fossil fuels. We strongly encourage the Columbia County Commissioners to approve the NEXT Renewable Fuels land use permits.

The Commission already approved the major facility land use permit and found that NEXT is aligned with local zoning and land use codes. These two current applications support multi-modal accessibility for the facility and have incorporated regulatory feedback from the Land Use Board of Appeals as well as ensured consistency with local regulations. The rail design is aligned with RIPD-zoned use and the majority of the rail is now sited on the already-approved industrial land, with only a ¼ mile sliver crossing agricultural land, which is an allowable use under Oregon law.

The NEXT facility will be an important part of building out Oregon's green economy. It will be a major contributor to the growth of green jobs in the state, creating more than 3,500 union jobs during construction and more than 240 union jobs during operation. NEXT is publicly committed to supporting green job training to maximize local participation in hiring, and the company has signed a Memoranda of Understanding with the Columbia Pacific Building Trades Council and Southwest Mountain Regional Council of Carpenters to use highly skilled union labor to construct the facility. NEXT has also signed a Neutrality Agreement with United Food & Commercial Workers Local 555 if the facility workers choose to unionize. The growth of green jobs and incorporation of union labor is a model for 21st-century industry in Oregon.

The Oregon Labor Movement believes that these permit applications should be approved to ensure quality union jobs can be created and maintained throughout the state and to ensure that Oregon can meet its state climate goals.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments at this important stage of this vitally important process moving towards a triple-bottom-line win for Columbia County and the State of Oregon.

Graham Trainor, President
Oregon AFL-CIO