

08/31/2026

To the Oregon Department of Aviation Board,

My name is Hannah McLaughlin. I am a pilot based out of Salem (SLE) and I am writing to support the Pacific City State Airport (PFC) and request that SOAR funds remain allocated to this airport, as previously approved by the Oregon Department of Aviation (ODAV).

I have flown into PFC a number of times both during flight training and after receiving my certificate. It's an airport I hope to visit regularly in the coming years as I return my own airplane to service. It's concerning to hear that some board members feel that PFC is a dangerous airport. Are either of these board members pilots? Have they flown into this airport? Are these board members suggesting that pilots operating in and out of PFC are operating unsafely? While flying on the Oregon Coast can offer unique challenges in terms of weather and wind conditions, PFC is not a challenging airport to operate out of.

Many airports have obstructions within the same or lesser distances than PFC does. The airport was built under and remains compliant under Tillamook County regulations, developed long before ODAV's current standards went into effect. Why does the Board suggest that funding be pulled from PFC, instead of grandfathering in the airport based on it meeting County requirements? It feels like ODAV is grasping for any reason to pull funding from PFC. As someone who has frequented PFC in the past and plans to in the future, I can say with confidence that I have never felt unsafe flying in and out of PFC, and I take offense to anything that may suggest that members of the board feel pilots are not operating safely here.

Friends of the Pacific City State Airport have established a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with ODAV, with one of the shared goals being **"To engage in candid but civil discussions about what is best for the Airport, local community and users of the Airport, keeping in mind our shared goals of preserving and improving the Airport."** I would ask the board to explain how pulling previously approved and much needed funding, and ultimately suggesting the sale of the airport to private ownership (who may or may not maintain the airport) contributes to that goal.

The Pacific City State Airport (PFC) is a valuable piece of infrastructure well utilized by both in and out of state general aviation pilots, first responders such as Life Flight, and the Coast Guard, and is well loved by the community. It is perfectly located to access local restaurants and tourist attractions that are otherwise not easily accessible to the general aviation community. It is a popular spot for lunch or a day at the beach, and is a favorite among local pilots. It also offers easy access to the community and can act as a staging area for first responders in the event of an emergency. It is well loved and supported by residents of Pacific City.

Friends of PFC have done tremendous work in helping manage and maintain the airport, as well as applying for much needed funds to repair and improve the airport. Friends of PFC has, in my eyes, more than fulfilled its part of the MOU. I have rarely seen a more dedicated group of volunteers, and the state's resistance to volunteerism and "sweat equity" investment is concerning, especially with such a willing group who have already done significant work to the airport.

I understand that ODAV is facing a budget shortfall of close to 3 million dollars, and that one of the reasons the agency would like to pull previously approved funding from PFC is to help make up for

08/31/2026

this shortfall. While I don't envy the board in having to make these decisions, I question why it seems that only Pacific City State Airport is being considered for reallocation of funding. The drainage problem at the airport will not get better. PFC floods with the King Tides every year. Is it not a liability issue for the state if this is not addressed? Deferring that maintenance does not make the need for it disappear. The APRON extension and emergency access road would only improve the airport for all who utilize it. The funds specifically allocated to this project were approved in 2020. We are now approaching the end of 2026. There has already been an almost 7 year delay for this project, and further delays jeopardize the safety of those who frequent this airport. These improvements should have been made years ago.

I would also request the board to reconsider any notion of selling PFC to a private owner. Small airports are valuable pieces of infrastructure, and while they do offer many advantages for tourism, they are also a life line to those communities in the event of a natural disaster or other emergencies. Indeed, Life Flight and the Coast Guard both utilize PFC. Once an airport disappears into private hands, it's rare that it comes back, and everyone suffers when a resource like this is lost, even if it is not immediately apparent. Furthermore, ODAV's apparent habit of making decisions with little to no public input about public use airports is disturbing and quite frankly, unacceptable. I have been concerned about the lack of communication with pilots and local stakeholders about state managed airports from ODAV, most recently with Mulino State and Joseph State, as well as the ongoing issues with the Aurora State Master Plan, all of which are airports I personally utilize. This is yet another example of poor communication on the part of ODAV.

I ask that ODAV do the following:

- Keep the SOAR funds already approved for PFC allocated to the airport for much needed improvements and work to find other solutions to the budget shortfall. ODAV's financial shortfall is not a sufficient reason to redirect funding that has been approved for this project for almost 7 years.
- Work with Tillamook County on grandfathering in the airport for setback requirements. The airport has been operating safely for decades while meeting county requirements.
- Keep PFC as a state-owned, public use airport for everyone to enjoy.
- Improve communication with pilots, stakeholders, and other airport users prior to any major decision making for *all* state owned airports, and honor commitments that have already been made.

Oregon has a rich aviation history and we are fortunate to have so many beautiful public use airports to enjoy. The Oregon Department of Aviation can, and should strive to become a leader among state aviation agencies, not work against it's own mission to "Support airports, pilots, and aviation businesses." I would love to see ODAV become a role model for other state aviation agencies to follow, and hope that is something I get to see happen.

Sincerely,

Hannah McLaughlin
Private Pilot
Salem, Oregon