

**Testimony on HB 2662**  
**Before the Joint Transportation Committee**  
February 21, 2023

**Co-Chairs Sen Gorsek, Rep McClain, and members of the Joint Transportation Committee:**

This is in support of HB 2662. For public transit to be effective, frequency and connectivity are essential. For Westside Express (WES) to have return on investment, it must operate when, and where, travelers need. WES offers significantly improved travel time and capacity on a congested corridor (Highway 217, I-5) without the many downsides and high costs of increased road structures.

In 1986 two Oregon Department of Transportation employees, Dave Paoli and Robert Rynerson, recognized the need for improved public transit for people who lived in Portland but worked in Salem. Working within ODOT, Rynerson and Paoli initiated a 501(c)(3) private, non-profit, **Commuter Club, Inc. (CCI)**. Most, but not all riders, were state employees. Riders included at least one (now former) State Senator and Majority Leader, Dick Springer, and (at last one) Secretary of State, Phil Keisling. Some riders worked in the private sector. This commuter service took many vehicles off the congested corridor, allowing productive use of time during a long commute.

I served on the CCI Board of Directors and as one of the van drivers operating from Beaverton, for several years - intimately familiar with traffic in this corridor. Many who used CCI often needed to arrive earlier, and depart later, than our service provided. Frequency is important to attract and maintain ridership. CCI operated 1-2 full sized motorcoaches, and sometimes one bus and one or two vans, from Portland and Beaverton (CCI was dissolved in 2021).

In 1999-2001 I was appointed to the **Washington Square Regional Center Plan Task Force**. Issues addressed was included congestion on Highway 217 and other nearby arterials. Many Task Force members, especially those who resided in the area, recognized the adverse neighborhood impact, the futility, and high cost of expanding pavement. We sought to emphasize cost-effective public transit. We were, to some extent, successful in slowing down ODOT's unsatiable appetite for pavement. Single occupant vehicles (SOVs) are very inefficient in terms of land use.

Devoting more land to the movement of SOVs inevitably leads to longer driving distances, more traffic, and consumes/displaces land needed for meaningful human pursuits. Sprawl increases costs in the public and private sector – *and* maintenance costs ODOT claims they cannot meet. Today ODOT is wasting money expanding Highway 217. This time they avoided solicitation of input which would have impeded their goal to expand pavement - a futile attempt to briefly move congestion to another pinch point.

If a fraction of the funds used to expand pavement were invested in improving public transportation *to move people* (WES is an excellent example) we would reduce travel times, maintenance costs, carbon emissions, energy consumption, health care costs, traffic fatalities ... without wasting more land.

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