

Submitter: Laurie Dougherty
On Behalf Of: Self bus rider transit advocate
Committee: Joint Committee On Transportation
Measure: HB3224

Co-Chairs Gorsek and McLain, Co-Vice Chairs Boquist and Boshart Davis, and members of the Committee,
I oppose HB 3224 the Salem streetcar study. I say that as a Salem resident who rides the bus, an advocate for public transit, and a lifelong transit rider in the several places where I have lived and visited. Sometimes I have had a car, often, including now, I have not.

Even though this bill is just for a study, a study will cost valuable resources in money as well staff time and effort for several city, state, and transit agencies. There are more productive ways to spend these resources, many more useful modes of alternative transportation that need attention such as safer street, better bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure, and improvements to the bus system that we already have.

Building rail infrastructure for a streetcar would be an expensive and disruptive construction project that would serve mainly a small part of the Salem population at a high cost. Once the rails are laid down there's no flexibility to meet changing needs. Buses can go anywhere and be deployed as needed.

Streetcars are trendy and attractive to tourists, but the function of public transit should be to connect the people who live here with places we want to go - to jobs, stores, services, recreation, and the like. A strong bus system does that. What we need in Salem is to keep expanding weekend and late night bus service for our everyday activities. A streetcar, even a study about a streetcar, would divert resources from an efficient, broadly useful public transit system in Salem.

I like the idea of a circulator for people who live and work downtown. It should include the Civic Center as well as the areas designated in the bill). Buses work well. If expanding on-board capacity is an issue, consider articulated buses. They carry a lot of people. If they can handle the narrow congested streets and tight corners in Boston, they can work in Salem. Electric propulsion is more efficient and free of local emissions; however, electric buses are coming to Salem and more of them would be a better use of transportation funds than a streetcar.

I urge you not to support HB 3224.
Thank you for the opportunity to comment.