



February 22, 2023

Co-Chair Senator Gorsek
Co-Chair Representative McLain
Co-Vice Chair Senator Boquist
Co-Vice Chair Representative Boshart Davis
Members of the Joint Committee on Transportation
Oregon State Capitol
900 Court St. NE
Salem, OR 97301

Dear Co-Chair Gorsek, Co-Chair McLain, Co-Vice Chair Boquist, Co-Vice Chair Boshart Davis:

Travel Salem is submitting this letter in support of HB 3224 regarding a feasibility study focused on light rail in Salem.

Travel Salem is the official Destination Marketing and Management Organization (DMMO) for Salem and the Marion and Polk Counties region. We promote the region to attract leisure visitors, groups, conventions, and sporting events. Visitors generate \$676 million dollars to the two-county region and more than 90% of visitors use auto transportation throughout our destination.

Here are a few real examples of how light rail would positively impact the Salem region:

- West Salem is home to Wallace Marine Sports Complex, which is a major softball hub on the West Coast. Annually, thousands of people visit Salem to play in state, regional, and national softball tournaments (that last 3-5 days) and thousands more come as spectators. The ability for these tournament attendees to use a light rail system to access West Salem would take an enormous amount of traffic off the Marion & Center Street bridges and main arterial streets.
- IRONMAN 70.3 Oregon has been held in Salem since 2020. This event attracts 7,000 athletes and spectators to Salem's Riverfront Park every July. A light rail system would alleviate parking challenges and distribute visitors throughout the city to increase spending at local businesses.
- Salem's Amtrak station is blocks from the Oregon State Capitol, major historic attractions, Willamette University, Salem Hospital and Salem's historic downtown. Visitors coming into Salem via Amtrak would be able to use the light rail system instead of a rideshare, taxi, or rental car.
- Salem has been working on attracting commercial air service to the Salem Airport. As air service becomes a reality, a light rail system would provide a car-free option to experience the Salem region.

These are just a few examples of how light rail would improve accessibility; reduce traffic and emissions; enhance visitor expenditures and the quality of life for Salem residents.

Thank you for considering this testimony and supporting the passage of HB 3224.

Sincerely,

Angie Villery, CEO – Travel Salem
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