

House Bill 3224 – Testimony in Support.
February 23, 2023

I am here to support passage of House Bill 3224 to conduct a study to determine the feasibility of developing a rail streetcar system for Salem. The modern streetcar is playing a dynamic role, around the world, making cities more livable and vibrant. A streetcar would be a catalyst for many social and economic benefits for the Salem area. Here are some of the reasons to approve HB 3224:

1. It increases the mobility of people and offers an attractive transportation alternative.
2. Addresses equity issues by providing mobility options for low income, disabled, students and others unable to drive and/or own a motor vehicle.
3. It attracts high levels of private investment along its routes and near stops.
4. It contributes to responsible land use practices.
5. Provides jobs and access to jobs along the route. Gives businesses access to customers and is a tool for workforce growth.
6. It adds capacity to the urban and regional transit systems and stimulates increased patronage over the entire transit network.
7. Park and Ride lots near streetcar stops help lower the number of vehicles entering congested areas. Streetcar riders reduce the employee and customer parking requirements for businesses and public agencies.
8. It slows the growth of traffic congestion by offering a travel option.
9. Provides another Salem River Crossing that is not impacted by congestion on the highway bridges. This is an incentive for riding the streetcar instead of driving. It also provides a path for emergency vehicles should one of the road bridges be blocked.
10. Streetcars improve people's quality of life. They can reduce family transportation costs and provide more mobility options. People who use streetcars walk more, thus staying healthier.
11. Helps reduce greenhouse gases, vehicle miles traveled and fuel consumption. Uses electric power rather than imported fossil fuels.
12. Streetcar travel is psychologically more attractive than riding buses. People who will not ride a bus will leave their car to ride a streetcar. They will even ride a bus to connect to the streetcar, thus generating more patronage on the connecting transit lines.

Many of the trips across Salem's bridges travel to destinations within one mile of the bridge heads. These places could be linked by a streetcar line:

1. Downtown Salem – The Salem Center Mall
2. The Downtown Transit Center
3. The YMCA
4. The State Capitol Government Complex
5. Willamette University
6. The Salem Hospital and other medical facilities
7. The Salem Railroad Station intercity service center.
8. West Salem Shopping Complexes
9. West Salem Park and Ride Lots
10. Residential areas
11. The West Salem Transit Center
12. Riverfront Park and Wallace Marine Park

North American Cities with modern streetcar systems:

Atlanta GA	New Orleans LA*
Cincinnati OH	Oklahoma City OK
Dallas Tx*	Portland OR**
Detroit MI	Salt Lake City UT
El Paso TX*	San Francisco CA*
Kansas City MO	Seattle WA
Kenosha WI*	Tacoma WA
Little Rock AR*	Tampa FL*
Memphis TN*	Toronto ONT Canada
Mesa AZ	Tucson AZ **
Milwaukie WI	Washington DC**

*Service operated with vintage or replica streetcars.

**Uses streetcars manufactured in Oregon.

There are additional cities with streetcar lines in the planning or construction phase.

The following revisions to the bill are suggested:

Make the Salem Area Mass Transit District and the City of Salem the lead agencies managing the study with the Oregon Department of Transportation and Oregon Department of Energy supporting partners.

Move the completion date for the study at least one year later to allow time for the required RFP process to take place.

Provide a funding source for the study, either federal or state. The Salem Area Mass Transit District has the matching funds in its budget.

Include a representative from a transit advocacy group on the citizens' advisory committee for this plan.

The board of the Association of Oregon Rail and Transit Advocates will be asked to endorse House Bill 3224 at their meeting this Saturday. Conversations with fellow board members indicate this action will be approved.

As a passenger transportation/tourism professional with over 50 years of management experience in the industry, I urge passage of this legislation with most of the amendments proposed by today's testimony.

Robert E. Krebs, AORTA, Immediate Past President
Former: Cherriots' Board Director, ODOT Passenger Rail Coordinator and Oregon Business Owner