

Dear Co-Chairs McLain and Frederick, Co-Vice-Chairs Boshart Davis and Boquist, and committee members,

Please consider this additional testimony. By adopting the -3 amendment, and implementing replacing the I-5 bridge with a tunnel, so much money would be saved that these two traffic reducing ideas could be implemented:

1. A Regional Rail Commuter System could be implemented. I-5 congestion could be reduced by developing regional electric-battery passenger rail service on the existing rail lines. Rail travel provides safer travel and equity to all citizens. Regional Rail could reduce the 143,000 autos crossing the Columbia River. Commuters using Regional Rail could reduce their travel time up to 50%!
2. C-Tran & TriMet could implement a system that would improve bus route schedule reliability, save fuel costs, incentivize more people to leave their cars at home and reduce freeway congestion.

Item 1: Commuter Rail would be faster than driving a car because existing train tracks do not have to compete with vehicle traffic. Unimpaired track corridors are already in place!

A bus goes about one mile on a fifth of a gallon of diesel, costing about one dollar to move 40 passengers. The San Francisco BART passenger rail car uses about 3.5 Kilowatt/Hour per mile costing about 35 cents to move 150 passengers. A fleet of Stadler Battery powered Passenger Cars (FLIRT) are in service in Germany which has proved to reduce carbon emissions. Battery or Hydrogen powered Rail cars could be used in the Northwest to reduce greenhouse gases. Regional Rail travel is faster than automobiles. Rail commuters would avoid tolls, bypass I-5 Bridge and the congested Rose Quarter as currently proposed by the Interstate Bridge Replacement Program.

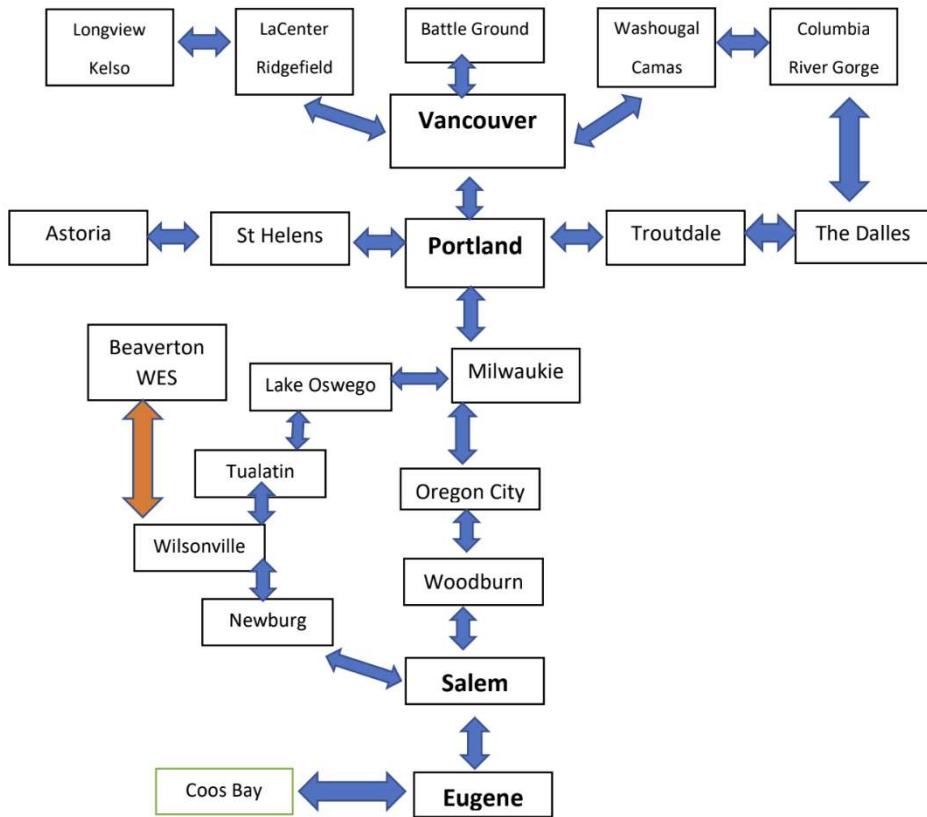
Tolling does little to reduce carbon emissions, while electric powered passenger rail cars have tremendous emission reduction. Rail travel provides safer travel and equity to all citizens. Regional Passenger Rail system with only 17 foot wide right of way can move as many passengers per hour as a four lane freeway. Rail is much cheaper and faster to build than a freeway. Passenger trains could travel during the day and Freight trains can use the same rails during off hours and at night.

The Chelatchie Prairie Railroad parallels SR 503 from Vancouver to Yacolt. WSDOT is currently welcoming public comments for a study to improve transportation opportunities for SR 503 in Clark County. This concept study could use federal IJIA funding for a cost-benefit analysis and economic analysis. The Cascades/AMTRAK trains travel from Vancouver to Portland in fifteen minutes.

The following map shows corridors which have freight trains running that could be modified relative cheaply to add regional rail passenger service.

Clark County RR

State Highway 503



Item 2: Oregon and Washington have an opportunity to save \$ on replacing the old I-5 bridge with a safer, better and cheaper Immersed Tube Tunnel option. Some of the Billions saved could be put towards a solution that would

- improve traffic congestion
- create more equity between those of different economic status
- open more opportunity for those in with low income
- increase ridership on local transit buses
- lower transit fuel costs
- improve bus schedule reliability and make routes faster

Studies have shown that bus fares comprise a relatively minor part of transit agency budgets, and why eliminating fares at other transit systems has increased ridership and reduced operating costs while making bus service faster and more convenient.

<https://massbudget.org/2021/03/24/the-dollars-sense-of-free-buses/>

A study by the National Association of City Transportation Officials (NACTO), found that on busy routes the time spent waiting for passengers to board and depart the bus, known as “dwell time”, can be as much as one-third of bus travel time.

<https://nacto.org/tsdg/better-boarding-better-buses/>

Recent TriMet budgets show roughly 10% of their budget is covered by fares. Revenue from Commuter rail, where passengers would happily pay to reduce their commute times, could help support this free local transit bus program.

Thank you committee for your time in contemplating other uses for the Billions that could be saved by implementing the -3 amendment, and limiting the resources put into replacing the I-5 bridge with a smarter, safer, cheaper, more seismically sound solution such as the Immersed Tube Tunnel

Sincerely, Rev. Rebecca Friend of Hayden Island

Note: Regional Commuter Rail information provided to me by David Rowe.