

SB 1553 A STAFF MEASURE SUMMARY

House Committee On Judiciary

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Meeting Dates: 2/27, 2/29

WHAT THE MEASURE DOES:

Expands the crime of interfering with public transportation to include when a person, while in or on a public transit vehicle or public transit station, knowingly consumes a controlled substance that is not lawfully possessed by the person. Provides that a conviction for interfering with public transportation established by this measure shall be classified as a designated drug-related misdemeanor.

ISSUES DISCUSSED:

- Importance of safe public transportation for businesses, youths, persons with disabilities, and visitors to Portland
- Incidents of drug use and drug induced behavior on public transit
- Investments by tri-met towards safety and security have doubled
- Obligation to provide safe and clean work environment for public transit employees
- Open drug use at stations and on transit is reportedly responsible for a decrease in ridership

EFFECT OF AMENDMENT:

No amendment.

BACKGROUND:

Under current Oregon law, it is a Class C misdemeanor crime to interfere with public transportation by engaging in a variety of conduct, specified in ORS 166.116. The behavior constituting criminal interference includes entering or remaining unlawfully on public transit vehicles or at public transit stations; interfering with the movement of, or access to, public transit vehicles; engaging in disorderly conduct on public transit vehicles or at public transit stations; and subjecting public transport passengers or employees to offensive physical contact.

The Department of Corrections, under ORS 423.478, is responsible for community-based supervision, sanctions, and services for offenders convicted of certain crimes, including those designated as drug-related misdemeanors by statute. Currently, the crimes listed in statute as designated drug-related misdemeanors involve the unlawful possession of a controlled substance.