

February 13, 2024

Joint Committee on Transportation
Oregon State Legislature

Cherriots Urges Support for SB 1572

Dear Co-Chairs Gorsek and McLain and Fellow Committee Members:

On behalf of the entire Board of Directors of the Salem Area Mass Transit District, I am writing to express my strong support for Senate Bill 1572, which proposes the creation of a feasibility study for extending the Westside Express commuter line to Salem. As the President of the Board of the Salem Area Mass Transit District, also known as Cherriots, I would like to highlight the importance of this initiative in fostering efficient and holistic transportation solutions for our community.

Cherriots has long been dedicated to providing comprehensive transit services for commuters in the Salem area. While we currently co-operate a bus line between Salem and Wilsonville, there is significant potential for a more effective and safer transportation option into the Portland Metro area by expanding regional rail service.

The proposed extension of the Westside Express commuter line aligns perfectly with our vision for enhancing transportation connectivity in our region. The Keizer Transit Center, a key component of our transit infrastructure, was strategically designed to connect seamlessly with rail services. Expanding the Westside Express to Salem would fulfill this vision and contribute to the realization of a robust and integrated transportation network.

Extending the Westside Express to Salem would significantly improve connectivity between our region and the Portland Metro area, benefitting daily commuters and fostering economic development and regional collaboration. Regional rail service is renowned for its efficiency and speed. The Westside Express extension has the potential to offer commuters a faster and more reliable transportation option, reducing travel times and enhancing the overall commuter experience while minimizing the risks of accidents on the I-5 Corridor.

A well-functioning regional rail system has the potential to reduce the environmental impact of commuting by encouraging the use of public transportation, aligning with broader environmental sustainability goals, and promoting a greener and more eco-friendly mode of transportation.

The extended rail service would likely stimulate economic development in Salem and surrounding areas by attracting businesses, residents, and tourists who value efficient transportation options.

The Keizer Transit Center was strategically designed to integrate with rail services, implementing the Westside Express extension as a seamless process, allowing for a quicker rollout of the service and benefiting our community sooner rather than later.

In conclusion, the Salem Area Mass Transit District strongly urges the favorable consideration and passage of Senate Bill 1572. The proposed feasibility study is crucial to realizing a more connected and efficient transportation network for our community. We appreciate your dedication to enhancing transportation options and believe that extending the Westside Express commuter line will bring immense benefits to Salem and the broader region.

If you need additional information, please do not hesitate to contact the District's General Manager, Allan Pollock. You may contact him at (503) 361-2550 or allan.pollock@cherriots.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Maria Hinojos Pressey". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Maria Hinojos Pressey
President, Board of Directors