

Submitter: Mick Hangland-Skill  
On Behalf Of:  
Committee: Joint Committee On Transportation  
Measure: SB1572

I am excited to support this study to expand TriMet's Westside Express Service (WES) from its current terminus in Wilsonville to Salem. As a current infrequent rider of WES, I look forward to all-day, everyday service that will make riding easier and more convenient along the current route. I often ride public transit to visit my friends who live in Tigard across from the WES station. However I can only ride WES if I happen to be visiting when the train is running, which is not often. Calling this rail line "commuter rail" does a disservice to those of us not traveling for work; those who would willingly give up driving in favor of visiting friends by train. The term "regional rail" is better suited for the goals of this project. I first believe an increase in service should be a top priority.

Second, extending WES through the mid-Willamette Valley will reestablish the once great passenger rail system of Oregon's past. I believe this is the first necessary step to expanding passenger rail throughout the state, as it will prove there is demand for non-car travel options that are reliable, frequent, clean, and safe. From this extension I hope an entire network of regional passenger rail springs up across the Willamette Valley. Cities along the proposed route have already expressed their support for this project. Their residents deserve travel options and should not be expected to move across the region by car alone, and alone in a car. Those of us in Portland should also be able to reach these cities without a car as well.

Expanding passenger rail is also climate friendly and is in alignment with our state and regional goals to fight climate change. Oregon should be focused on increasing non-car travel options and reducing the amount of vehicle miles traveled (VMT) by individual citizens.

Finally, I look forward to the Westside Express Advisory Committee's recommendation on the governance of the extended rail line. TriMet is struggling to support the current service, and their efforts may better be focused on the Portland Metro's bus and light rail services. I believe a new governing body focused on local passenger rail in the Willamette Valley should be established. Perhaps even separate, but complementary, to the current governance of the Amtrak Cascades service. This will remove the financial burden of operating the line from TriMet and allow the reach of this rail line to grow beyond their service district.

Thank you for considering my comments. Please support this bill.