



February 11, 2024

Sen. Gorsek and Rep. McLain, Co-Chairs
Members
Joint Committee on Transportation
State Capitol
Salem OR 97301

RE: SB 1572 - 1000 Friends Supports

Dear Co-Chairs McLain and Gorsek and Vice-Chairs Boshart Davis and Boquist:

1000 Friends of Oregon writes to you today in strong support of SB 1572, which, if passed would create a task force to study how Westside Express Service (WES) rail could be expanded to reach Salem with local stops along its route. Founded in 1974, 1000 Friends of Oregon is a nonprofit membership organization that works with Oregonians to support livable urban and rural communities, protect family farms, forests, and natural areas; and provide transportation and housing choices. We have members in all parts of Oregon.

Of Oregon's 19 land use goals, goal 12 is related to transportation. Goal 12 calls on Oregon's land use planning system to "consider all modes of transportation"¹ and understand their relative tradeoffs. Oregonians lack consistent and dependable alternatives to driving a car up and down the Interstate 5 corridor. Between 20% and 30% of Oregonians 16 and older do not drive due to age, income, capacity, or choice, and this percentage is increasing. This means goal 12's call to focus on all modes and options in transportation reflects that not all Oregonians can drive, as well as gives all Oregonians options other than their car to get around

The Northern Willamette Valley is home to a unique and highly productive agricultural region, created by the Missoula Ice Dam Floods over 15,000 years ago, which deposited world-class soils across the Pacific Northwest. This geologic happenstance is the backbone of our region's renowned food systems, which sustain thriving wine, fruits, vegetables, grains, and nut industries. We risk losing our unique soils if we do not protect them and carefully consider questions on growth and sprawl. Land use planning forced to revolve around automobiles places more pressure on farmland to be converted in places such as French Prairie and Aurora.

Extending the WES Commuter Rail to Salem would offer several other benefits from a land use perspective beyond mitigating sprawl and protecting farmland, including:

¹ [Oregon's Statewide Planning Goals & Guidelines GOAL 12: TRANSPORTATION](#)

- Provide new options for Transit-Oriented Development (TOD): Extending commuter rail service encourages transit-oriented development, where housing, businesses, and services are close to transit stations. Unlocking more transit access allows us to make more impactful housing investments, exceptionally affordable housing developments,² which are proven to benefit residents through transit while providing a consistent transit user base.³
- Create Economic Development: Improved access to Salem via commuter rail could stimulate economic development by increasing connectivity between Salem and the larger Portland metropolitan area, in addition to direct construction jobs. Studies show that multimodal transportation projects generate more jobs than roadway projects by 70%.⁴ Businesses will be attracted to locate along the rail corridor, and commuters may find it more convenient to access job opportunities in both regions while being unrestricted by the potential of a long car commute.
- Reduced Congestion and Emissions: By providing an alternative to driving, extending commuter rail can help reduce traffic congestion and greenhouse gas emissions associated with commuting. This benefits both the environment and public health by improving air quality and reducing commuters' time in traffic.⁵

Extending the WES Commuter Rail to Salem could support more sustainable and efficient land use patterns by promoting transit-oriented development, reducing sprawl, fostering economic growth, improving access to affordable housing, and mitigating congestion and emissions. It would also help Oregon create a new pathway to activate federal transit dollars with intra-city transit. This is particularly important as we outline a path for significant projects and investments in a 2025 transportation package.

Thank you for your consideration, and we strongly urge the passage of SB 1572.

Thank you,

Brett Morgan
Transportation Director and Legislative Manager
1000 Friends of Oregon

² [You are here: A snapshot of how the Portland region gets around | Metro](#)

³ [Equitable transit-oriented development | allincities.org](#)

⁴ [Transportation For America Road and public transit maintenance create more jobs than building new highways](#)

⁵ [Reducing Congestion and Funding Transportation Using Road Pricing in Europe and Singapore](#)

