

February 13, 2024

FROM: Jonathan Harker, AICP (SD #23)

TO: Joint Committee On Transportation

Senator Chris Gorsek, Co-Chair

Representative Susan McLain, Co-Chair

Senator Brian Boquist, Co-Vice-Chair

Representative Shelly Boshart Davis, Co-Vice-Chair

RE: Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 1572 related to establishing a task force to study the feasibility of extending the Westside Express Service (WES) commuter rail to Salem

Dear Co Chair Gorsek and McLain, Vice-Chairs Boquist and Davis, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony in support of SB 1559 related to updating Oregon's GHG emission reduction goals.

I am testifying today as a retired city land use planner with 35 years of experience in city land use planning. At retirement I was the City of Gresham's Urban Design & Planning Director. Since retirement I have continued to be active in land use and transportation planning issues especially related to climate change and equity. Recently I served as a member of DLCD's Climate Friendly and Equitable Communities (CEFC) Rules Advisory Committee. I am also testifying as the grandparent of a 28-month old grandson and 16-month old granddaughter.

I am supporting SB 1572 because I believe that extending the Westside rail to Salem will help Oregon meet its GHG emissions reduction goals: "The rail network, for both passengers and freight, produces lower GHG emissions than roadway and air transportation, which means that shifting trips from road and air to rail in markets where it makes sense can reduce overall transportation emissions " (Federal Railroad Administration - [railroads.dot.gov](https://www.railroads.dot.gov)).

I am supporting SB 1572 because I support integrated land use and transportation planning and believe that expanding the Westside rail will encourage transit-oriented development and economic development. As a long time Gresham planner I have seen the value and opportunities presented along commuter rail lines.

I am supporting SB 1572 because the extension of the Westside rail will add an equitable transportation option offering more access to jobs, education, and healthcare, especially for Oregonians without access to a car (many Oregonians can't drive due to age, disability, or cost).

I would suggest that the study required by SB 1572 address two critical issues

raised by the Federal Railroad Administration - [railroads.dot.gov](https://www.railroads.dot.gov)):

1. "Rail's reliance on diesel fuel leaves a large challenge in reducing GHG emissions from the rail industry. Transforming railroad power to clean and renewable fuels is critical in responsibly protecting the environment. Shifting the propulsion and general operation of locomotives from traditional energy to sustainable fuel sources will be beneficial to the health of the rail industry and our planet."
2. "The rail industry is vulnerable to climate-related weather events and must address the issue of infrastructure resiliency. [Rail] investments should be built to withstand the effects of climate change. Adverse conditions, such as excessive heat, flooding, sea-level rise, tornadoes, hurricanes, and wildfires are exacerbated by climate change and threaten the safety and reliability of the rail network."

My understanding is that the 2025 session will have a significant focus on updating Oregon transportation infrastructure. Strategically investing in all transit options such as commuter rail should be a critical needed action to ensure that my grandchildren and their peers can prosper in living their lives as I have been able to do which underscores the importance of SB 1572.

Thank your for attention.