

Submitter: John Russell
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Joint Committee On Transportation
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB3231

Co-Chairs and Members of the Committee,

My name is John Russell, and as a traffic engineer and seventh generation Oregonian, I strongly urge you to support HB3231, which prioritizes needed investments in Oregon's passenger rail system. The I-5 corridor is the backbone of the Willamette Valley and our entire state's transportation network, yet it faces a growing crisis: worsening congestion, rising emissions, and limited alternatives to driving. The simple reality is this—our current approach to transportation is unsustainable, and only by expanding and modernizing passenger rail can we create a system that becomes better and more efficient as more people use it, rather than less.

Unlike highways, which become slower and more congested the more people rely on them, rail systems regularly improve with higher ridership. A well-funded, high-speed rail corridor would offer a seamless, reliable, and convenient alternative to driving—one that gets faster, more frequent, and more efficient as demand grows. In contrast, our default approach of expanding highways does the opposite: every new lane we add fills up within years, inducing more traffic, more emissions, and more costly gridlock, limiting options and slowing down Oregon's economy. The math is simple: highways spread congestion, while passenger rail improves everyone's mobility.

The benefits of investing in passenger rail are undeniable:

- Traffic relief at scale – Every full train removes hundreds of cars from the road, reducing congestion not just for rail users but for those who must drive. No highway project can achieve that impact.
- More reliable travel times – Unlike I-5, where a minor crash or rush-hour traffic can cause unpredictable delays, passenger rail operates on a fixed schedule, giving Oregonians a dependable and stress-free alternative.
- Environmental and public health benefits – With each passenger mile traveled, rail produces significantly fewer emissions than single-occupancy vehicles. Less traffic means cleaner air and healthier communities.
- A transportation system that grows with us – Oregon's population is increasing, and we need a transportation network that scales efficiently. Rail networks improve with higher demand, whereas highways fail under pressure.

Every day we delay meaningful investment in passenger rail, we commit to a future of worse congestion, more pollution, and fewer choices. Expanding passenger rail isn't just an alternative—it's the only sustainable way forward. I urge you to pass HB3231

and give Oregonians the modern, efficient, and future-proof transportation system we deserve.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
John Russell, PE