



**Testimony by City of Wilsonville Mayor Shawn O’Neil Supporting HB 3231:**

***Legislation Should Provide Opportunity to Study WES Commuter Rail-Service Extension Connecting Portland and Salem/Keizer Metro Areas with a High-Capacity Transit Alternative to Automobile Commuting on Congested I-5***

Scheduled for public hearing on Feb. 4, 2025, before  
the Joint Committee On Transportation

Co-Chairs Gorsek and McLain and Members of the Committee:

I am testifying in strong support of HB 3231, which expands the required components of the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) State Rail Plan to include strategies for boosting capacity, upgrading and improving railroad track and infrastructure, and information on federal grant-funding opportunities.

As traffic congestion on the South Portland Metro and North Willamette Valley I-5 corridor continues to worsen, commuters, shoppers and those with medical appointments would welcome a public-transit alternative unaffected by ever increasing highway traffic congestion. Unlike buses that can get caught in I-5 traffic congestion, WES as a commuter train with its own right-of-way is unimpeded by highway traffic congestion, offering the potential for a reliable transportation option that connects two major metro areas. The lack of sufficient reliable, public-transit commute options along I-5 from Salem/Keizer to Portland metro area makes a non-highway mobility option like WES more attractive.

**An ODOT study of a potential WES commuter train extension provides the state an opportunity to leverage substantial Federal Transit Administration (FTA) funds for commuter rail service connecting the Portland METRO and Salem-Keizer SKATS—two Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) Transportation Management Areas (TMAs)—and that can increase greatly WES ridership levels.**

The Joint Committee on Transportation twice unanimously voted in favor of advancing a WES Extension Study: HB 2662 in 2023 and SB 1572 in 2024. However, both bills subsequently died in the Ways and Means Committee.

The Salem Area Mass Transit District (“Cherriots”) and the Mid-Willamette Valley Council of Governments (MWVCOG) are well positioned to collaborate with ODOT by working with jurisdictions along the Portland and Western RR (old Oregon Electric Line) to study issues around an extension of WES from Wilsonville to Salem/Keizer that passes through the cities of Donald and Woodburn; see attached one-pagers in support of HB

2662 and SB 1572 for the proposed WES extension study. The MWVCOG manages the Salem-Keizer Transportation Study (SKATS), which acts like Portland METRO's Joint Policy Committee on Transportation (JPACT) as the federally-chartered MPO TMA policy board for the greater Salem/Keizer metro area.

The City of Wilsonville operates the award-winning South Metro Area Regional Transit (SMART) agency, which collaborates with the Salem Area Mass Transit District to share the Monday through Friday commuter "1X Express" bus route on I-5 between Wilsonville and Salem. SMART buses also meet each TriMet WES train in Wilsonville to provide the last-mile connection to local area employers. SMART also provides regular service to Canby and Tualatin, and is now planning new routes to Oregon City and Woodburn.

The City appreciates your consideration and urges a Do-Pass vote on HB 3231. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,



Shawn O'Neil, Mayor  
City of Wilsonville

Enclosures:

- "Support SB 1572 – ODOT Study Connecting Portland Metro-Area WES Commuter Train to Salem/Keizer Metro, Extending from Wilsonville to Salem," Portland–Salem/Keizer Metro Areas WES I-5 Commuter Rail Extension Study Coalition, 2/9/2024
- "Support HB 2662-A – Task Force to Study Connecting Portland Metro-Area WES Commuter Train to Salem/ Keizer Metro, Extending from Wilsonville to Salem," Portland–Salem/Keizer Metro Areas WES I-5 Commuter Rail Extension Study Coalition, 5/915/20243

# Support SB 1572 – ODOT Study Connecting Portland Metro-Area WES Commuter Train to Salem/Keizer Metro, Extending from Wilsonville to Salem

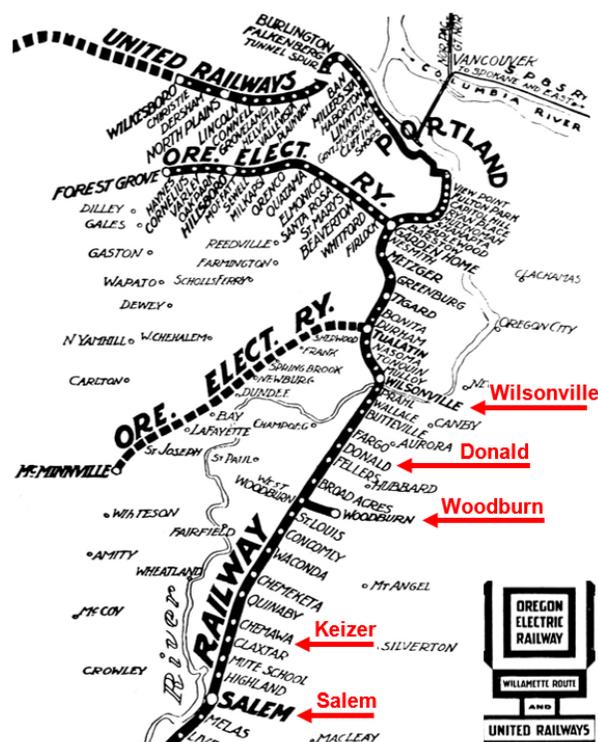
Portland–Salem/Keizer Metro Areas WES I-5 Commuter Rail Extension Study Coalition

With 27 legislators as co-sponsors, SB 1572 is a bipartisan, bicameral legislative concept to advance high-capacity transit option for Oregonians and visitors.

SB 1572 creates a multi-organizational task force—the Westside Express Advisory Committee—composed of local governments, transit agencies, railroads and public-interest groups to study extending the current rush-hour-only Westside Express Service (WES) commuter train from the current southern terminus in Wilsonville for 31 miles to Salem, with stops in Donald, Woodburn and Keizer. The bill calls for ODOT to report back to the legislature in December 2024 with study findings and recommendations. A similar bill during the 2023 session, HB 2662, passed unanimously by the Joint Committee on Transportation.

- **Increasing population** of Portland metro and North Willamette Valley region needs mobility options, especially for commuters and seniors, many who require transportation for jobs, education and medical appointments.
- **I-5 traffic congestion continues to worsen** and prospective ODOT tolling of I-205 and I-5 in Portland metro area requires a reliable public-transit alternative unaffected by highway traffic congestion and tolls.
- **Additional Federal Transit Administration (FTA) support** for high-capacity transit WES commuter rail service connecting METRO and SKATS—two federally-designated Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) Transportation Management Areas (TMAs)—that can increase ridership.
- **Transit commuting and shopping option supports economic-development efforts** of North Willamette Valley communities.
- **Use of former Oregon Electric Railway line**, now owned by Portland & Western and BNSF Railroads, which support the WES extension study, that operated 1908 – 1933.

- **SB 1572 is supported** by the Cities of Aurora, Beaverton, Donald, Hubbard, Keizer, Salem, Tualatin, Tigard, Wilsonville and Woodburn; Metropolitan Mayors’ Consortium; Mid-Willamette Valley Council of Governments; Salem Area Mass Transit District (“Cherriots”), SMART (South Metro Area Regional Transit) and Yamhill County Transit; 1000 Friends of Oregon; Association of Oregon Rail and Transit Advocates, Travel Salem; and the railroads.



**FOR MORE INFO, CONTACT:**  
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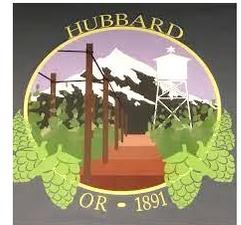
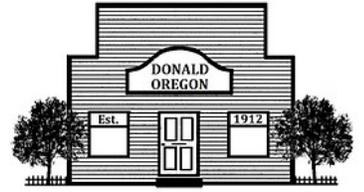
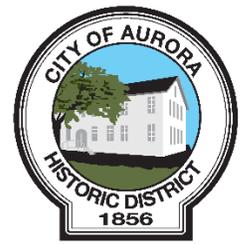
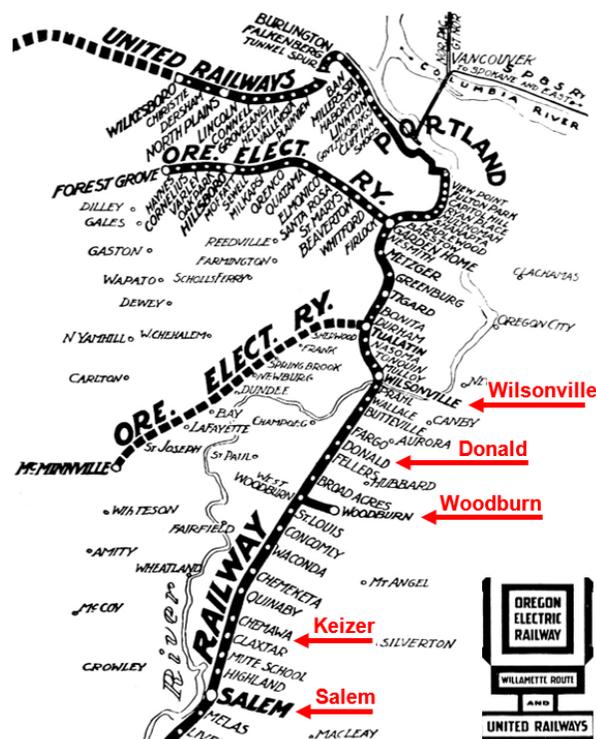
# Support HB 2662-A – Task Force to Study Connecting Portland Metro-Area WES Commuter Train to Salem/Keizer Metro, Extending from Wilsonville to Salem

Passed unanimously by the Joint Transportation Committee on May 18, 2023, HB 2662-A is a bipartisan bill to create a multi-jurisdictional task force composed of state legislators, local governments, transit agencies and railroad interests to study extending the current rush-hour-only Westside Express Service (WES) commuter train from the current southern terminus in Wilsonville for 31 miles to Salem, with stops in Donald, Woodburn and Keizer. The bill calls for the Willamette Valley Commuter Rail Task Force to report back to the legislature in 2024 with study findings and recommendations.

- **Increasing population** of Portland metro and North Willamette Valley region needs mobility options, especially for commuters and seniors, many who require transportation for jobs and medical appointments.
- **I-5 traffic congestion continues to worsen** and prospective ODOT tolling of I-205 and I-5 in Portland metro area requires a reliable public-transit alternative unaffected by highway traffic congestion.
- **Additional Federal Transit Administration (FTA) support** for high-capacity WES commuter rail service connecting METRO and SKATS—two federally-designated Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) Transportation Management Areas (TMAs)—that can increase ridership.
- **Transit commuting and shopping option supports economic-development efforts** of North Willamette Valley communities.
- **Use of former Oregon Electric Railway line**, now owned by Portland & Western Railroad which supports the WES extension study, that operated 1908 – 1933.

Western Railroad which supports the WES extension study, that operated 1908 – 1933.

- **HB 2662-A is supported** by the Cities of Aurora, Donald, Hubbard, Keizer, Salem, Wilsonville and Woodburn; Salem Mass Transit (“Cherriots”), SMART (South Metro Area Regional Transit) and Yamhill County Transit; and P & W Railroad.



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