

Submitter: Erik Halstead
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Joint Committee On Transportation
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB3453

Hello. I am Erik Halstead, a former transit rider, and now a resident of Salem, who works in the Portland metro area.

You will be surprised to hear I am opposing this bill that could theoretically support me, but the reality is, any support is theoretical at best. When I lived in Tigard and elsewhere in the Portland metropolitan area, TriMet repeatedly promised that rail would improve transit - instead, TriMet repeatedly cut bus service to pay for the expensive trains. Today, TriMet's transit ridership is actually at or below 2005 levels, despite billions of dollars in spending that almost entirely went towards rail service.

Last year, TriMet even admitted in testimony before the Legislature, that paying for WES resulted in cuts to vital, critical and essential bus service, often in areas of marginalized populations.

How will creating a new layer of government, with no taxing or revenue authority, solve those problems? How will expanding a system, whose riders refuse to pay even close to its operating costs, solve those problems?

The facts are clear - not one single governmental body from Portland to Salem, including the counties, the transit agencies, regional governments, and even the State of Oregon itself, has fully committed to funding WES, nor interest in operating WES. If anything, they have made it clear they do not want to spend money on WES. We know that WES costs over \$100 in public subsidy each time someone sets foot aboard a train. In this day where we are struggling to fund basic services, struggling to support our most needy citizens, how can we afford a luxury train for a tiny population - largely on the premise of "we don't like buses"?

I'd love to live in a mansion, but sadly I cannot afford it. I'd love to have a pool, and an RV, and a motorcycle in addition to my car, but I cannot afford it. Oregon cannot afford WES. Creating another bureaucracy, with another appointed and unelected Board, will not solve the problems. We COULD have great intercity bus service in the Willamette Valley, but Oregon has chosen not to be reasonable with the public's money. Numerous public bodies, from Portland to Salem, from Metro to Cherriots, from TriMet and Marion County, all have emphatically stated, they WILL NOT PAY FOR WES. We need solutions, not more unfunded mandates, not more unelected Boards, not more expensive pet projects. It is time to kill this train once and for all, and use the millions of dollars to RESTORE vital, critical and essential transportation services to people who need buses to get to work, to buy groceries, to get

healthcare, and to visit recreational sites throughout the Willamette Valley. And let's be clear - a luxury commuter train for a tiny select few Oregonians, is hardly meeting any of Oregon's diversity or environmental goals. In fact, it will cause more pollution, less diversity, more exclusion. Let's work for a true solution for ALL Oregonians. Not a train for the "top 0.00001%".