

Submitter: Joel Cvetko
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Joint Committee On Transportation
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB3453

Dear Co-Chair McLain, Co-Chair Gorsek, Vice-Chair Boshart-Davis, Vice-Chair Starr, and members of the Joint Committee on Transportation,

I am writing to express my strong support for HB 3453, a bill that promises to transform transportation between the Portland metro area and Salem, with future expansions to Eugene. This initiative will not only enhance regional connectivity but also bolster local economies, alleviate traffic congestion, and improve safety along the I-5 corridor.

Investing in robust passenger rail services will stimulate economic growth in our communities. Enhanced rail connectivity will attract businesses seeking efficient transportation options, leading to job creation and increased economic activity. Local businesses, from retail to hospitality, will benefit from the influx of travelers and the improved accessibility to markets and resources.

The I-5 corridor is notorious for heavy traffic, leading to significant delays and, tragically, frequent accidents. State workers commuting between Portland and Salem are particularly affected. A poignant example is the tragic death of Dr. Steven Fritz, husband of former Portland City Commissioner Amanda Fritz, who lost his life in a head-on collision on I-5 while commuting to his position as a psychiatrist at Oregon State Hospital in Salem. By providing a reliable and efficient rail alternative, we can reduce the number of vehicles on the road, decreasing congestion and the likelihood of such heartbreaking incidents.

Furthermore, HB 3453 will strengthen the ties between employment and business centers in the South/West Portland Metro Area and the Salem/Keizer region, making the State Capitol more accessible. This enhanced connectivity will facilitate smoother commutes for workers, encourage collaboration between businesses, and promote a more integrated regional economy.

It's also important to recognize that approximately 30 percent of Oregonians, including seniors, young people, and individuals with disabilities, either cannot or choose not to drive. Enhanced passenger rail services will provide these residents with greater access to opportunities, services, and social connections, fostering a more inclusive and equitable transportation system.

In addition to economic and accessibility benefits, the environmental advantages of reducing single-occupancy vehicle travel cannot be overstated. The transportation

sector is a significant contributor to greenhouse gas emissions in Oregon. By shifting more travelers to rail, we can make substantial progress toward our environmental goals and promote sustainable development.

Thoughtful planning of station development and connections along the corridor is essential to maximize the benefits to the communities served. This bill presents a unique opportunity to commit to transit-oriented development, fostering healthy, livable communities that are well-connected and comfortable. Expanding WES service to Salem and Eugene will pave the way for vital investments in housing, retail, education, recreation, and job opportunities around new stations.

HB 3453 is a crucial step toward a more connected, accessible, and sustainable Oregon. By enhancing passenger rail services, we can improve the quality of life for our residents, protect our environment, and strengthen our economy.

Thank you for considering my comments on HB 3453. I urge you to support this bill and help usher in a new era of transportation for Oregon.

Sincerely,

Joel Cvetko
Sherwood resident