

Submitter: Walt Mintkeski  
On Behalf Of:  
Committee: Joint Committee On Transportation  
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB3453

I am an Oregonian, since 1972, who supports HB 3453, which will positively affect anyone traveling between the Portland metro area and Salem (and eventually, Eugene). The bill establishes a Westside Express Service (WES) Authority to transfer operational responsibility away from TriMet. It lays out how the WES Authority would operate and lays out direction to extend the service to Salem and ultimately to Eugene, and increase frequency of service.

HB 3453 would increase access to opportunities for the approximately 30 percent of Oregonians who can't or don't drive, a group that includes a high portion of seniors, young people, and people with disabilities. It would also help commuter congestion in the I-5 corridor by more efficiently moving people than in single-occupancy vehicles. Also, Oregon's transportation sector is the biggest contributor to the state's greenhouse-gas emissions, which this bill would also help reduce.

This bill is a special opportunity to grow our commitment to transit-oriented development, helping us build healthy, livable communities that feel connected and comfortable. Increasing WES service to Salem and Eugene will open the door for vital investments in new housing, retail, education, recreation, and job opportunities around those new stations.

This bill is part of a larger needed strategy around improving passenger rail and intercity transit service across the state. There is a significant need for improved transportation options between communities. People in rural areas need to be able to connect to healthcare and other life-sustaining services in major metropolitan areas. Likewise, urban residents should be able to access recreation, attend events, and visit friends and family across the state without needing a car.

This bill is a step toward a more connected, accessible, and affordable Oregon, where more people can move freely across large portions of our state without needing a car or contributing to harmful carbon emissions.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on HB 3453, and I urge you to vote in its favor.

Walt Mintkeski, Portland, OR