

Submitter: Sam Bennett
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 an Oregonian who supports HB 3453, which will positively affect anyone traveling between the Portland metro area and Salem (and eventually, Eugene). This bill will increase regional transportation options and accessibility, and reduce congestion and greenhouse-gas emissions from intercity travel in the Willamette Valley.

I and many other Oregonians who live throughout the Willamette Valley work for the state government at offices in and around Salem. Increasing transit options from these cities to Salem will make commuting for state work easier and boost the value proposition of state employment. Further, it will enable a more diverse array of Oregonians to work for their state government and other public entities headquartered in Salem by reducing the cost of commuting.

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. Notably, Oregon's transportation sector is the biggest contributor to the state's greenhouse-gas emissions, which this bill would also help reduce.

We need to thoughtfully plan station development and connections along the corridor for the maximum benefit to the communities WES will serve. This bill is a special opportunity to grow our commitment to transit-oriented development, too, 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.

I see this bill as being 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. I urge you to vote in support of this bill.