

March 10, 2025

Joint Legislative Committee on Transportation
Oregon State Capitol
Salem, OR 97301

Dear Co-Chairs Gorsek and McLain:

HB 3453 envisions a commuter rail line running from Beaverton to Eugene. While I share the enthusiasm of the bill's sponsor for passenger rail, the history of TriMet's Westside Express Service (WES) shows that a market for commuter rail does not exist.

WES began operating in February 2009. During the planning stages, TriMet had predicted that opening-year ridership would average 2,500 average daily boardings. Actual ridership for 2009 averaged 1,140.

Daily ridership peaked in 2014 at 1,964 daily boardings, then dropped in each successive year. During Fiscal Year 2019, just before COVID, daily ridership on WES averaged 1,505. In the most recent fiscal year WES averaged just 477 boardings per day.

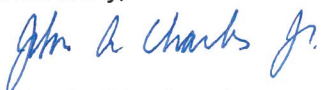
Since each rider typically takes two daily train trips, that means WES only has about 240 actual customers.

With such little ridership, public subsidies are substantial. Last year the operating cost per boarding ride on WES averaged \$103, far in excess of the standard TriMet fare of \$2.80.

WES was originally projected to cost \$65 million and open in 2000. It actually cost \$161.2 million and opened in 2009.

There is no business case for expanding commuter rail. In fact, taxpayers would be better served if we canceled WES, sold off the train cars, and moved the few customers back to buses.

Sincerely,



John A. Charles, Jr.
President & CEO

