

Submitter: Andrea Haverkamp
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Joint Committee On Transportation
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB3453

Dear Co-chairs Gorsek and McLain and members of the Joint Committee on Transportation. My name is Dr. Andrea Haverkamp and I live in Portland, Oregon. I enthusiastically support House Bill 3453.

As an advocate with a PhD in Environmental Engineering, the intersection of infrastructure and sustainability are deeply important to me. I'm also an employee who travels to Salem and Eugene often for work. If I could do so by train, I would.

WES service, under a WES authority and with increased range and service, has the potential to be a potent solution for persistent private vehicle congestion on I-5 and a critical economic asset for generations to come.

A WES Authority would be a significant move toward a multimodal transportation network that decreases reliance on personal automobiles. It would address the urgent need for more sustainable and efficient travel options in the Portland Metro Region and beyond.

The proposed expansion of WES will stimulate economic growth, encourage transit-oriented development, and conserve valuable agricultural and natural lands, fostering a balanced approach to development and land conservation in the Willamette Valley.

Extending WES to Salem was studied in 2009 by HDR Engineering, at the time WES was opened. The tracks, structures, and current freight service have also been studied as part of the high-speed rail corridor Tier 1 environmental analysis done by the Federal Railroad Administration, which ultimately selected the Union Pacific tracks for Amtrak Cascades expansion. Metro is now doing additional studies of Portland-area rail infrastructure. Much of the technical work has already been done.

Opportunities exist for terminating the WES extension at the Salem Amtrak station. It may also make sense to electrify the route, and operate some segments at higher speeds, which may be easier to do given the lower level of freight traffic on the Oregon Electric route. An Amtrak connection could extend the usefulness to longer trips from Washington County to Albany, Eugene, Klamath Falls, and beyond to California.

Electric rail is booming and boosting ridership, speed, reliability, and using renewable

energy for zero emission transit already in California with the CalTrain system. Some countries like India, China, and Switzerland already have electrified most of their passenger train networks. WES holds this potential in the future.

The WES Authority will hopefully identify federal funding opportunities and provide supporting information for competitive grant applications and justification for future State of Oregon investments.

As a member of the Association of Oregon Rail and Transit Advocates (AORTA) and a worker who wishes to reduce her private vehicle use for a more climate friendly future, I encourage your YES vote on HB 3453.

Thank you,

Dr. Andrea Haverkamp