



American Planning Association
Oregon Chapter

Creating Great Communities for All

March 11, 2025

Joint Committee on Transportation

Re: HB 3453

Position: Support

Dear Co-Chairs Gorsek and McLain, Co-Vice Chairs Starr and Boshart Davis, and members of the committee:

I am writing in support of HB 3453, on behalf of the Oregon Chapter of the American Planning Association.

The Oregon Chapter of the American Planning Association (OAPA) is a nonprofit professional membership organization of over 800 planners and those who work with planning in formulating and implementing development and conservation policies at the state and local level. OAPA works to create sustainable and vibrant Oregon communities through professional development, advocacy for sound planning, providing resources to meet the challenges of growth and change, and embracing and promoting diversity, inclusion and equity.

HB 3453 would establish a Westside Express Service (WES) Authority that would study and support extending the current Beaverton to Wilsonville express commuter rail, first to Salem, and then to Eugene.

OAPA support for HB 3453 stems from its policy priorities to “Promote Safe and Equitable Transportation Systems” and to “Confront climate change and its impacts”. This legislation promotes an element, intercity passenger rail, that is an integral component of integrated transportation, housing, and other land-uses (such as higher education) necessary for thriving and sustainable Oregon communities.

OAPA recognizes the importance of strategically investing in all transit options, including rapid bus transit, self-propelled light rail, streetcars, **commuter trains**, and heavy rail systems. Extending WES would promote improved connectivity with Oregon's largest population center, its State capital and its 2nd largest city. Extending WES, integrated with land uses, supports increased mobility options (including 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); economic development; access to recreation and tourism; and reduced congestion along I-5.

OAPA also recognizes that the bill will contribute to climate change mitigation through increased equitable access to a sustainable and reliable commuter rail which produces lower GHG emissions than roadway travel.

In supporting HB 3453, OAPA requests that the WES extension study and its development prioritize the safety of all users while considering vulnerable system users. OAPA also requests emphasizing transparent, community-led engagement and equitable participation methods, focusing on involving underserved populations most affected by transportation decisions.

Thank you for your consideration of OAPA testimony on HB 3453. Investing in public commuter rail provides economic, climate and community resiliency benefits for Oregonians.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jonathan Harker". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Jonathan Harker

Chair, Legislative and Policy Affairs Committee
Oregon Chapter of the American Planning Association
www.oregonapa.org