

Submitter: Kevin Kincaid
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Joint Committee On Transportation
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB3453

Co-Chairs Gorsek and McLain, and members of the Committee,

I am writing in support of HB 3453. In order to best serve the transportation needs of the 21st century, Oregon needs to develop a strong rail network. This bill will bring reliable transportation between Beaverton and Eugene, and reduce car dependency and carbon emissions for people along the routes.

The current WES is far from perfect. It's range is limited between Beaverton and Wilsonville, it only runs during weekday commuter hours, and even during that time it has a frequency of 45 minutes. All of this reduces ridership on the system, as it has limited convenience for commuters and is not useful for people not traveling for work.

However, this bill takes several steps to improve this service substantially. By increasing frequency, it reduces the necessity of scheduling commuter travel around the limited number of trips per day. Additionally, if a person misses a train they would only need to wait, say 20 minutes instead of 45. Expanding the hours would also serve the travel needs of people beyond commuters. The complete lack of weekend service limits the functionality of this train line. The key feature of this bill is the support of the WES expansion towards Salem, and eventually Eugene. Extending the line to Salem alone will connect multiple communities and allow train access to destinations such as the Woodburn Outlet mall, Kaiser station, and our state's capitol. Providing rail access to jobs will cut down on traffic on I-5 and give Oregonians more affordable travel options.

Given ridership numbers for the past year on Amtrak's cascades line, it is clear that Oregonians want effective and frequent train travel. Our state should be providing and subsidizing affordable rail transit for as many citizens as possible. The WES can be an excellent service, but it must run frequently enough to be convenient for riders and needs to connect to more cities and destinations. This bill is a critical step in order to improve rail service across Oregon. Additionally, I hope this is only the first step in expanding Oregon's rail network. There are many other large communities that need passenger rail connections, including Bend, Medford, and Corvallis, and I hope this committee will begin supporting studies for building rail in those places as well.

Thank you for your time and consideration.