

## Climate Rail Alliance

## on Oregon HB 3453

On the one hand, HB 3453 as now written is a zero dollar policy bill. This may appeal to a legislative majority.

On the other hand, without outlining how WES will become a success for taxpayers, especially based on the historic ridership and revenue experience with WES to date, how could HB 3453 appeal to a legislative majority, why wouldn't a majority of legislators and taxpayers say don't throw good money after bad?

If a compromise is needed HB 3453 may be written to be more narrow and targeted than the following Climate Rail Alliance critiques and recommendations.

However, what isn't in the bill will need to be used in future to again educate legislators and taxpayers about the ultimate goal.

That will leave advocates with the responsibility to follow up with the new regional rail authority, legislature, and taxpayers to pass future legislation.

Why not draft HB 3453 now to get as close as possible to accommodate the following Climate Rail Alliance criticisms of and recommendations for HB 3453:

1. HB 3453 is inaccurate. WES is not properly called "commuter" rail. Commuter is simply from the suburbs toward Portland City Center in the morning and return in the evening. WES is properly called "regional" rail, (e.g., Portland City Center to the suburbs, or suburb to suburb at any time of day), and freight service, too.
2. The HB 3453 mandate for a WES Authority is not broad enough. Yes, start by creating a rail authority. But don't limit the rail authority to WES alone. There are many other routes, based on the future success of WES, that will need administrative authority, too, (see appendix). Therefore, the authority needs a mandate to administer and receive funds for any regional rail service operating in Oregon and, given the interstate geography of the Portland Metro, Southwest Washington, too.
3. HB 3453 must specify that WES service and fare structure integrate with all public and private transportation along its route.
4. HB 3453 must define a service area large enough to support a given regional rail route. In the case of WES, some simply advocate it extend from Wilsonville to Salem. This is not a large enough service area:
  1. Go further south than Salem. It can serve local stops between Salem and Eugene that Amtrak *Cascades* service does not. Or, it can serve Amtrak *Cascades* local stops Salem to Albany, then go west to Corvallis to serve Oregon State University. Either way, Amtrak *Cascades* and extended WES services are complementary.
  2. Extend WES east ASAP as an express service, (skip local stops), from Beaverton to Portland Union Station, (with over 500,000 annual Amtrak intercity

Cascades, and long distance Coast Starlight, and Empire Builder services passengers), and the Portland International Airport, (nearly 20 million annual passengers). First, use POINT buses, later, after proven success, use rail. From Beaverton, extend the express bus to Hillsboro and Forest Grove, again skip local stops. With success, replace the express bus with rail Beaverton-Hillsboro-Forest Grove

3. The traveling public needs express options, whether bus or rail, to bypass local stops to save valuable travel time. Skip all or most other local stops between Beaverton, Portland Union Station and the Portland International Airport. Develop significant new through/overhead travel from both existing light rail and WES customer bases.
4. Significant WES extensions to the east and south maximize travel volume and revenue.
5. WES needs to leverage innovative, new freight revenue, too, whether directly carried by its trains, or on the same tracks that are improved for its trains to operate on.
5. Use the initial WES express bus service to develop market share and provide positive feedback to the larger light, regional, intercity, and long distance rail planning process, especially, in the case of WES, for a Portland City Center light and regional rail tunnel.
6. HB 3453 needs to specify that the WES express bus be cross financed with freight revenue from the regional United States Postal Service, Processing & Distribution Center, located at the Portland International Airport. Other dedicated shipper partners need to be established, too:
  1. Freight may be carried in storage compartments under, or in trailers towed by the WES express buses
  2. Numerous options for handling freight on the regional WES trains, or on the same tracks
7. At a later date, with success of the above extensions:
  1. Extend WES east from the Portland International Airport through the Columbia River Gorge to the Idaho border. Serve local markets , (e.g., via Troutdale, Corbett, Bridal Veil, Multnomah Falls, Cascade Locks, Hood River, The Dalles, Biggs Jct., Boardman, Hermiston), that in future, will be complemented by Amtrak long-distance Pioneer express service on the same tracks.
8. Oregon legislature allocate via HB 3453 funds for the regional rail authority to be established and rail and transit professionals be hired to plan specifics for the extension of WES to the east and south per the above descriptions. Forecast freight and passenger revenues. Forecast taxpayer highway cost savings. Estimated cost to establish and staff regional rail and transit authority and conduct initial WES proposal \$1 million. We need to spend money if we are to reduce taxpayer expense on and negative externalities created by highway travel and shipping.
9. Appendix covering WES and other regional routes, see:
  1. [Kelso to Salem regional rail 2024.07.29 DRAFT.pdf](https://www.railpac.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/Kelso-to-Salem-regional-rail-2024.07.29-DRAFT.pdf) by Brian Yanity, or use link <https://www.railpac.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/Kelso-to-Salem-regional-rail-2024.07.29-DRAFT.pdf>

2. [Portland Salem rail + station appendix BYanity 2025.02.11 DRAFT.pdf](https://www.railpac.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/Portland-Salem-Rail-station-appendix-BYanity-2025.02.11-DRAFT.pdf) by Brian Yanity, or use link  
<https://www.railpac.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/Portland-Salem-Rail-station-appendix-BYanity-2025.02.11-DRAFT.pdf>
3. [Kelso to Salem electrification appendix 2024.08.23 DRAFT.pdf](https://www.railpac.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/Kelso-to-Salem-electrification-appendix-2024.08.23-DRAFT.pdf) by Brian Yanity, or use link  
<https://www.railpac.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/Kelso-to-Salem-electrification-appendix-2024.08.23-DRAFT.pdf>
4. [Regional Passenger SW Washington. pdf](https://www.railpac.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/Regional-Passenger-SW-Washington.pdf) by Dave Rowe, or use link  
<https://www.railpac.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/Regional-Passenger-SW-Washington.pdf>
5. [regional rail corridors Willamette Valley and Coast HPR .pdf](https://www.railpac.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/regional-rail-corridors-Willamette-Valley-and-Coast-HPR-.pdf) by Dave Rowe, or use link  
<https://www.railpac.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/regional-rail-corridors-Willamette-Valley-and-Coast-HPR-.pdf>
6. [Why IBR did not study BNSF Columbia Crossing.docx](https://www.railpac.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/Why-IBR-did-not-study-BNSF-Columbia-Crossing-.pdf) by Dave Rowe, or use link  
<https://www.railpac.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/Why-IBR-did-not-study-BNSF-Columbia-Crossing-.pdf>
7. [Stadler Specs EMU.pdf](https://www.railpac.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/Stadler-Specs-EMU.pdf), or use link  
<https://www.railpac.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/Stadler-Specs-EMU.pdf>, an option for rail equipment.
8. [RailRunner Terminal Anywhere](https://railrunner.com), or use link <https://railrunner.com>, one of many options for freight service.
9. Read more about the Climate Rail Alliance proposal for WES in the read-only doc [Climate Rail Alliance Recommendations for the State of Oregon 2025 Transportation Bill](https://docs.google.com/file/d/1OKV4hf-wlGAJ1Vipq7gbLvg0yGeiT7Jq/edit?usp=doclist_api&filetype=microsoftword), or use link  
[https://docs.google.com/file/d/1OKV4hf-wlGAJ1Vipq7gbLvg0yGeiT7Jq/edit?usp=doclist\\_api&filetype=microsoftword](https://docs.google.com/file/d/1OKV4hf-wlGAJ1Vipq7gbLvg0yGeiT7Jq/edit?usp=doclist_api&filetype=microsoftword), go to Section II, Recommendation A. For complete understanding, please read the entire 15-page doc in detail.
10. Please also read the entire [CRA Recommendations Executive Summary](https://docs.google.com/document/d/10z_O68k3MNZDmpHsmY0IW91WpkguNA_A5MmL3hLu0wh4/edit), or use link  
[https://docs.google.com/document/d/10z\\_O68k3MNZDmpHsmY0IW91WpkguNA\\_A5MmL3hLu0wh4/edit](https://docs.google.com/document/d/10z_O68k3MNZDmpHsmY0IW91WpkguNA_A5MmL3hLu0wh4/edit), note Section VI, Item 6 about WES.
11. [Climate Rail Alliance on Oregon HB 3453](https://docs.google.com/document/d/133opDPuGrxRSR9AfnlNduilDUY_Zb_gcT5YOPcgS4Bk/edit), or use link  
[https://docs.google.com/document/d/133opDPuGrxRSR9AfnlNduilDUY\\_Zb\\_gcT5YOPcgS4Bk/edit](https://docs.google.com/document/d/133opDPuGrxRSR9AfnlNduilDUY_Zb_gcT5YOPcgS4Bk/edit)

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I greatly appreciate assistance with them from Brian Yanity, Dave Rowe, and Thomas White. What is written only reflects my personal assessments and opinions, not necessarily theirs.

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