



1000 Friends of Oregon  
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March 11, 2025

To: Joint Committee on Transportation  
Subject: HB 3453 – Establishing WES Authority

Dear co-chairs McLain and Gorsek, vice chairs Boshart-Davis and Starr, and members of the committee,

1000 Friends of Oregon strongly supports House Bill 3453 to establish the WES Authority and take the necessary steps to move forward on pursuing a WES extension to Salem and Eugene.

Across the state during the committee’s listening tour, we heard calls for greater investments in public transportation, including passenger rail. Transportation options are desperately needed between major metropolitan areas, especially for the approximately 30 percent of Oregonians who can’t or don’t drive. Easing travel in the Willamette Valley for nondrivers would open up opportunities for accessing medical care, higher education, jobs, and even the state capital itself. For the many of us who live in the Portland area and work in Salem, it would be much easier, safer, and more affordable to catch a train that comes all the way here, especially on late nights and early mornings. I have friends who can’t take jobs that require travel to Salem because they don’t drive. As Oregon’s population ages, a larger portion of nondrivers will be older adults. Extending WES to Salem and Eugene, and increasing service will make it a more feasible transportation option than it is currently and it will meet the needs of more people by serving more cities and towns.

We also heard strong support at the listening tour for well-connected neighborhoods. To that end, we hope to see thoughtful station planning and landbanking as part of the WES extension efforts for maximum benefit to the communities WES will serve. Stations should be well positioned to connect to other modes for local travel, with minimal impact to any exclusive farm use lands. It should be easy to get to and from stations to your final destination without requiring the use of a car. This bill is a special opportunity to grow our commitment to transit-oriented development helping us build healthy, livable communities that feel connected and comfortable. Increasing WES service to Salem and Eugene will open the door for vital investments in new housing, retail, education, recreation, and job opportunities around those new stations. The WES extension is a necessary, complementary investment in addressing our state’s housing crisis.

*We have worked with Oregonians to enhance our quality of life by building livable urban and rural communities, protecting family farms and forests, and conserving natural areas since 1974.*

Growing passenger rail service in the Willamette Valley will increase transportation options, reduce congestion on I-5 thus allowing greater freight mobility, and reduce greenhouse gas emissions from transportation.

1000 Friends urges the committee to support this bill.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

*Cassie Wilson*

Cassie Wilson  
Transportation Policy Manager  
1000 Friends of Oregon