



American Planning Association  
**Oregon Chapter**

*Creating Great Communities for All*

March 18, 2025

Joint Committee on Transportation

**Re: SB 715**

Position: Support

Dear Co-Chair Gorsek, Co-Chair McLain, Co-Vice Chair Starr, Co-Vice Chair Boshart Davis, and committee members:

I am writing in support of SB 715, 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.

SB 715 would establish and, with the -1 amendments, fund a Cascadia High Speed Rail Task Force. The Task Force would be charged with evaluating and analyzing issues regarding high speed rail development in the Portland Metro area and in Oregon. It would report back to the legislature in subsequent years with a final report due January 2029.

OAPA support for SB 715 stems from its policy priorities to “Promote Safe and Equitable Transportation Systems” and to “Confront climate change and its impacts”. OAPA has previously provided support testimony on other rail related legislation — HB 3453 (Westside Express Service Authority); HB 3233 (Cascades Rail

Corridor) and HB 3231 (Passenger Rail Plan update) — and presumes that these bills and SB 751 will, in some fashion, ultimately be tied together.

This legislation promotes an element, high speed 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 high speed rail**, and heavy rail systems both in Oregon's largest population area and also throughout Oregon. High speed rail, when 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 connecting communities throughout Oregon.

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

In supporting SB 715, OAPA requests that the Task Force's research and analysis include putting a high priority on the safety of all users while considering vulnerable system users. OAPA also requests using a process that is transparent, uses community-led engagement and equitable participation methods including involving underserved populations most affected by transportation decisions.

Thank you for your consideration of OAPA testimony on SB 715. Investing in high speed rail will provide mobility, 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](http://www.oregonapa.org)