

Submitter: Erik Halstead  
On Behalf Of:  
Committee: Joint Committee On Transportation  
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB1202

Good day,

Senate Bill 1202, creating an "Oregon Department of Rail", is a solution in search of a problem.

Why do we need a "Department of Rail"? Is ODOT not doing its job - and what IS it's job when it comes to rail?

It seems there is a very small, but vocal, group of people who want more passenger trains. We've studied the issue, over and over - in fact at least six times just since I've been born. And each study miraculously comes to the same conclusion - yes, it's feasible, but it's expensive and we don't need it.

We already have two trains from Portland to Eugene that run mostly empty (even with it's "record-breaking performance, it still only averages 30% full). We tried the train to Astoria that lost money. We still lack a cohesive intercity transit network, we still lack intercity buses, and nobody holds TriMet accountable for its failure to perform its basic function to its citizens. Creating a "Department of Rail" doesn't solve or even get us closer to solving any of the problems; it just creates another bureaucracy with more appointed (not elected!) officials to get a paycheck and a PERS account for working one day a year and possibly some taxpayer funded vacations to "conferences" located in some very tourist-oriented locations like Hawaii, Orlando, Las Vegas and Anaheim.

We don't need another bureaucracy at a time we need to be looking for budget cuts. This is a solution to a non-existent problem.