



Oregon

John A. Kitzhaber, M.D., Governor

Department of Transportation

Director's Office
355 Capitol St. NE
Salem, OR 97301

DATE: March 18, 2013

TO: House Committee on Transportation and Economic Development

FROM: Hal Gard, Administrator
ODOT Rail Division

SUBJECT: House Bill 2338

INTRODUCTION

House Bill 2338 establishes a Task Force to explore extension of the Westside Express Service commuter line from Wilsonville to Salem and report to the interim legislative transportation committees by October 1, 2014.

BACKGROUND

The 2009 Legislature passed HB 2408, which directed the Department of Transportation to make a report regarding the capacity, availability and efficiency of rail transportation in Oregon, and to include in its report findings related to extending the Westside Express Service to Salem. The department complied, issuing the report as part of a detailed assessment of the entire rail system in the [2010 Oregon Rail Study](#) in August 2010. Appendix I of the study is the *Wilsonville to Salem Commuter Rail Assessment*.

Since then, ODOT began studying options for improved passenger rail service between Portland and Eugene. As part of this [project](#), ODOT and the Federal Railroad Administration are preparing a Tier 1 Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). This environmental review process will help ODOT and FRA make a number of important decisions, including selection of the general rail alignment and communities where stations would be located. The project will also determine several service characteristics, such as the number of daily trips, travel time objectives and the technologies to be used (for example, whether the trains will be powered by electric or diesel-electric engines).

The project includes a public involvement strategy to ensure robust stakeholder participation in the decision-making process. A Governor-appointed Oregon Rail Leadership Council and a Corridor Forum are leading the effort.

EIS alternatives are currently being screened and evaluated. Next steps will be to further study a smaller group of alternatives, then publish a draft EIS. A project [schedule](#) is attached.

DISCUSSION

HB 2338 creates a task force on Extending the Westside Express Service (WES) to Salem. (WES is a commuter rail service between Beaverton and Wilsonville, operated by Tri-Met.)

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The bill requires the task force to explore the possibility of extending the line and to implement a program to generate interest in extending the line. The bill suggests the task force research the need for the service and explore actions needed to extend the service.

Commuter rail needs can only be determined after the inter-city rail route and service have been identified through the current EIS process. The task force created under HB 2338 may be better able to consider extended commuter rail service in 2015 after the EIS record of decision on passenger rail service is issued.

SUMMARY

HB 2338 forms a task force to explore extending WES service to Salem. ODOT has an EIS effort underway to determine a passenger rail route and service which will inform the commuter rail conversation.

Attachment: EIS Schedule

