

**Testimony of Andy Shaw  
In Support of House Bill 3202  
House Committee on Energy and Environment  
April 10, 2017**



Chair Helm and Members of the Committee:

The Metro Council supports House Bill 3202, which would authorize a streamlined, but still thorough, land use approval process for the Southwest Corridor MAX Light Rail Project.

The Southwest Corridor, which stretches from downtown Portland to Tigard and Tualatin, is home to more than 10% of the population of the greater Portland metropolitan area and more than 250,000 jobs, as well as numerous educational institutions ranging from elementary schools to Portland Community College and Oregon Health and Science University. This is one of the fastest-growing and most congested corridors in the state, yet it remains the last major corridor in TriMet's system without light rail service.

Metro and our regional partners have been studying transportation solutions for this corridor for many years. It was identified as the next corridor for a regional investment in high-capacity transit in 2009, and light rail was only selected as the specific transit mode after years of study by a steering committee of elected leaders and agency officials.

Federal funding will be critical to the completion of the Southwest Corridor project, and federal transportation agencies place a premium on projects that can move quickly to approval in order to generate employment and economic development. The project will thus be more competitive if, rather than pursuing numerous local permits from multiple jurisdictions, it has access to a single efficient review process.

The Legislature has helped to advance the development of earlier segments of the region's light rail network by enacting two separate pieces of legislation to establish a single process and a single set of criteria for review of the Westside (1991) and South-North (1996) light rail projects.<sup>1</sup> The legislation was intended to address the complexity of the multiple processes involved in these multi-jurisdictional projects and to meet federal funding deadlines.

HB 3202 simply provides the same authorization for a single approval process to the Southwest Corridor project that the earlier legislation did for the earlier projects. While this approval process will be comprehensive and detailed, the project will only have to complete it once. Not only will this save time and money, but it will provide needed certainty and send the appropriate signal to our federal partners about the ability to move the project to development readiness.

As you know, local governments are generally loath to support legislation that pre-empts local decisionmaking. This is the rare instance where the benefits of such an approach are clear and widely agreed upon. The Metro Council urges you to help move a critical transportation investment forward by passing HB 3202.

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<sup>1</sup> The South-North project ended up being built in phases: first the Yellow Line to the Expo Center in North Portland, then the Green Line to Clackamas Town Center, and finally the Orange Line to Milwaukie. The light rail element of the Columbia River Crossing was also part of the South-North project addressed in the 1996 legislation but obviously has not been completed.