



Testimony by City of Wilsonville Mayor Tim Knapp to Support HB 2219:

Extension of WES from Portland Area to Salem Could Provide a Missing Transit Commute Option that Decreases I-5 Traffic Congestion

Scheduled for public hearing on March 4, 2019, before
the Joint Committee on Transportation

Co-Chairs Beyer and McKeown and Members of the Committee:

As the operator of South Metro Area Regional Transit (SMART) and a partner with TriMet on the Westside Express Service (WES) commuter rail line, the City of Wilsonville strongly supports advancing HB 2219, which creates a task force to study extending WES to Salem.

As the Portland metro region increases in population and jobs, the area's freeway arterials are reaching peak traffic-handling capacity. And as housing costs escalate in the Portland area, more workers are living outside the metro region, leading to increased commuting on highways.


Everyday commuters who drive I-5 to/from the Portland metro area to Salem and points south jam the South Metro/North Willamette Valley I-5 corridor, with the Boone Bridge over the Willamette River acting as a major chokepoint. ODOT reports that in 2016 129,400 vehicles daily crossed the I-5 Boone Bridge — 10,000 more vehicles than just five years earlier in 2011. Some estimates indicate that over 50% of I-5 traffic is attributable to single-occupancy commuter vehicles traveling between the Valley and Portland area. ODOT indicates the currently estimated \$80 million project to improve the I-5/Boone Bridge bottleneck is programmed to occur in 2040.

ODOT's 2016 Portland Region Traffic Performance Report shows that I-5 NB and SB during the PM peak-hours experiences some of the most unreliable travel times in the region. The report indicates that Daily Vehicle Hours Delay for the I-5 corridor has increased between 2013 and 2015 for both NB by 18% and SB by 24%, meaning that trips on I-5 are taking considerably longer now than just a few years ago.

Wilsonville's SMART provides over 300,000 rides per year, with about half of those rides shared with Salem-Keizer "Cherriots" Transit for Portland area-Salem commuters. SMART meets each WES train at the Wilsonville Transit Center, whisking employees to worksites in Wilsonville within 10 minutes of arrival—solving the 'last-mile' transit connection dilemma—and providing connecting service to/from Salem along with Cherriots. If WES was extended to Salem, SMART maybe positioned to re-deploy assets to provide even more service to communities in the North Willamette Valley and South Metro Area that are located away from I-5 that parallels the Oregon Electric Rail line that WES would use, thereby extending transit service to an even larger area.

The City of Wilsonville respectfully urges a Do-Pass vote on HB 2219. Thank you.

Sincerely,


Tim Knapp, Mayor
City of Wilsonville