

Testimony on HB 2603

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Why does our state, and our nation, often face “train delays?” Train delay is primarily a symptom of railroad infrastructure, **not** a byproduct of railroad operations.

An efficient, effective transportation system is dependent upon the **sensible** utilization of **all modes of transport**: highway, aviation, waterway and rail.

Generally speaking, railways are expected to rely on private investment to:

1. **Acquire** additional right-of-way.
2. **Develop** infrastructure on that right-of-way.
3. **Maintain** infrastructure.
4. **Provide security and safety** on and about their infrastructure.
5. **Provide traffic control** within their infrastructure, as well as between other modes of transport (such as drawbridges and grade crossings).

Furthermore, most railroad right-of-way and infrastructure are taxed by government entities.

This is generally not true of **any other mode of transport**. Highway, aviation, and waterway infrastructure is provided, maintained, policed and provided traffic control by federal, state and local governments and as such is not taxed. User fees are generally inadequate to sufficiently maintain and create said infrastructure. **Railway companies subsidize their competition.**

CBS Sixty Minutes omitted these extremely relevant facts from their report on rail safety. This is the underlying cause why two of my good friends lost their lives on December 18, 2017.

During economic downturns, national, state and local governments often use tax dollars to improve infrastructure in an **appropriate** effort to create jobs and stimulate the economy. This investment is often focused on improving and expanding capacity of highway, aviation and waterway infrastructure rather than privately-held railroad infrastructure. Conversely, during dips in economic activity, railroad companies – beholden to stock holders – often are forced to downsize infrastructure, and are understandably conservative with regard to investment/expansion during prosperous times.

Limited railroad infrastructure, compared to that of other modes of transport, is the root cause of delays to **both** freight and passenger trains. **Studying delays for individual trains or in a specific corridor addresses the symptoms rather than the illness.**

Creating adequate and appropriate infrastructure for all modes of transport is what Oregon needs to thrive, and doing so will highlight the safety, speed, comfort, fuel-efficiency, and appreciation of the environment that passenger trains – and railroads in general – provide.

I greatly appreciate that the Legislature is striving to address the issue.