



HB 2603 – Rail Delays Representative Chris Gorsek

Co-Chairs Beyer and McKeown, and members of the Joint Committee on Transportation, for the record I'm State Representative Chris Gorsek from House District 49.

Regarding HB 2603 there are several important issues to consider, one of these is the lack of investment in capacity over the past 20 years in our state. As freight trains have grown longer, the siding where trains are diverted for rail traffic coming from the opposite direction have not. The ongoing issue of passenger train delays because of this is taken as a matter of course for both passengers and railroad companies themselves.

As the need for increasingly efficient transportation for freight has grown we can see a future where passenger traffic will likely see a commensurate increase in demand. The study proposed by 2603 is essential for continuing to understand the current issues and how we might address them. Further, there has been movement for increasing rail travel and its infrastructure both to the north and south of Oregon over the past decade with sizable investments being made or considered. It would behoove us in Oregon to ensure that we're continually informed about where passenger rail is currently at and how we can start to prepare for the future.

Current investment in studying the challenges rails is facing will not become more affordable if we put it off for another session. We'll likely find that infrastructure improvements in the near term will position Oregon for a more rail friendly future at a better price than taxpayers will need to put forth if we wait. I would urge you to think of this legislation as a necessary step to ensuring that we're not too far behind our neighbors as they move more quickly into the future of passenger rail.