



Oregon

Kate Brown, Governor

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DATE: April 8, 2019

TO: Joint Committee on Transportation

FROM: Hal Gard, Administrator, Rail and Public Transit Division

SUBJECT: SB 747 –TriMet Crash Advisory Committee

INTRODUCTION

Senate Bill 747 would establish the TriMet Crash Advisory Committee to review crashes involving TriMet vehicles that result in injury or fatality. In accordance with federal regulations, the Oregon Department of Transportation's State Safety Oversight program performs a similar function for any crashes involving TriMet's light rail system.

DISCUSSION

SB 747 establishes the TriMet Crash Advisory Committee. The Committee is tasked with reviewing crashes involving TriMet vehicles that result in injury or fatality, and submit a quarterly report on its findings to the Transportation Safety Committee.

ODOT's State Safety Oversight (SSO) program was established in 1997; since that time the program has changed and grown to meet the needs of the rail transit industry. SSO is regulated through the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and oversees the safety and security of Oregon's Rail Fixed Guideway Systems, which includes TriMet light rail (in addition to trolleys and streetcars operating in Oregon). The SSO program inspects and audits these systems regularly to monitor hazards and conditions, inspect equipment and platforms, and ensure compliance with rules. SSO is also mandated by federal law to investigate or require an investigation of all reportable accidents (accidents resulting in injury, death, substantial damage, or derailment) and is ultimately responsible for the sufficiency of all investigations. These investigations identify factors that caused or contributed to the accident. ODOT may require corrective actions by the transit agency as appropriate, and the FTA has the authority to conduct its own independent investigation of any accident or findings of causation at its discretion.

ODOT has trained staff to perform accident investigations, as required by federal regulation. ODOT annually reports to the FTA information regarding SSO's role in each accident. In 2012, federal law was modified to require FTA certification of ODOT's SSO program. ODOT performs triennial audits of all rail transit agencies in Oregon, and the FTA performs triennial audits of ODOT's program for compliance.

SUMMARY

SB 747 would establish the TriMet Crash Advisory Committee to review crashes involving TriMet vehicles that result in injury or fatality. In accordance with federal regulations, ODOT's State Safety Oversight program performs a similar, federally-required function for crashes involving TriMet's light rail system. ODOT could expand this program to include all TriMet vehicles, however, this would require additional resources and expertise, since there are fundamental differences between bus service and light rail.