

Testimony of Randy Tucker, Legislative Affairs Manager
In Support of Senate Bill 226-A
House Committee on Rules
June 20, 2019



Chair Holvey and Members of the Committee:

As you know, Metro is the regional government of the Portland metropolitan area. Among our major responsibilities is ensuring that the urban growth boundary of the greater Portland region has enough land to accommodate 20 years of residential and employment growth. In 2002, under the rules that existed at the time (which have since been significantly changed), the Metro Council brought the Damascus area into the urban growth boundary.

As suggested above, the purpose of bringing land into the boundary is to efficiently accommodate urban development. However, after Damascus incorporated as a city, the city's voters enacted a series of ballot measures that effectively prevented the orderly urbanization of the area. Eventually, in 2013 and then again in 2016, the voters expressed their desire to dissolve the city.

Since the 2016 disincorporation vote, Happy Valley has developed and begun to implement a plan to annex and develop a portion of the former city over a 20-year timeline.^[1] More than 1000 acres that were formerly part of Damascus have already been annexed into Happy Valley, at the request of the landowners. The recent court decision throws this process and the status of these properties into confusion and uncertainty.

The Metro Council believes that the best way to proceed in securing the future that the residents of the Damascus area have said they want is to finalize the dissolution of the former city. If residents of the area wish to incorporate in the future, the Council believes a new city approved by the voters and unconstrained by the former city charter is far preferable to the resurrection of the city that the voters chose to dissolve.

With this in mind, the Metro Council urges you to support SB 226-A.

^[1] Several people have suggested in various forums that Metro continues to count the eastern part of Damascus as part of the region's buildable land supply, despite the fact that the area is unlikely to see urban development for decades, if ever. This is not true. As I testified in the House Interim Committee on Agriculture and Natural Resources on September 19, 2017, about half of the territory of the former city has been entirely excluded from Metro's buildable land analysis; in other words, Metro is counting zero capacity on that land.