

HB 2662 -4 STAFF MEASURE SUMMARY

Joint Committee On Transportation

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Meeting Dates: 2/21, 5/11

WHAT THE MEASURE DOES:

Directs the Oregon Department of Transportation to collaborate with TriMet and Portland & Western Railroad to study issues related to extending the Westside Express Service commuter rail line to Salem. Requires Department to report findings to interim committees related to transportation by September 15, 2024. Appropriates \$500,000 from General Fund to Department to conduct study. Sunsets January 2, 2025. Declares emergency, effective July 1, 2023.

NOTE - LFO requests that JCT add a referral to the Joint Committee on Ways and Means

ISSUES DISCUSSED:

- Role of rail transportation in reducing carbon emissions
- Role of rail transportation in reducing traffic congestion
- Potential connections of extended WES line
- Which entity should operate an extended WES service
- Need to ensure ability to continue to operate freight rail if on shared corridor
- Potential economic impact

EFFECT OF AMENDMENT:

-4 Replaces original measure. Establishes the Willamette Valley Commuter Rail Task Force, consisting of 18 members appointed by the Speaker, Senate President, and Governor. Directs Task Force to study extending Westside Express Service commuter rail line to Salem, frequency and hours of service, establishing a new entity to administer the rail service, and opportunities to apply for funding through federal Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act. Designates Legislative Policy and Research Office as staff support for Task Force. Directs Task Force to submit report to Legislative Assembly by September 15, 2024. Sunsets January 2, 2025. Declares emergency, effective on passage.

FIS: Fiscal statement issued on measure 2/the -4 amendment

RIS: No revenue impact on measure w/the -4 amendment

BACKGROUND:

TriMet is Oregon's largest provider of public transportation services, operating over 80 bus lines, five light rail lines, paratransit services, and one commuter rail line. The Westside Express Service (WES) was inaugurated in February 2009, connecting the Beaverton Transit Center to the Wilsonville Transit Center. The WES operates on freight tracks owned by the Portland & Western Railroad, and makes 10 trips north and south each weekday, roughly every 45 minutes. The WES service includes three intermediate stops and provides connections to the South Metro Area Regional Transit (SMART) system in Wilsonville, the Yamhill County Transit Area system in Tigard, and Salem-Keizer Area Mass Transit District, also known as Cherriots, via express bus from Wilsonville to Salem.

House Bill 2662 directs the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) to conduct a study of the issues related to extending the WES commuter rail line south to Salem. The study is to consider the feasibility of using the defunct Oregon Electric Railway corridor, and requires consulting cities that could be served by the service extension.