

Co-Chairs Gorsek and McLain and Members of the Committee:

As a long-time Salem resident I want to enthusiastically support HB 3224 to study the feasibility of a streetcar in Salem that would connect West Salem with downtown, Salem Hospital, Willamette University and the Capitol Mall.

Like a number of cities in Oregon, Salem had a wonderful system of streetcars a century ago. In Salem this began in 1889 with a horse-drawn streetcar connecting downtown to the train station. In 1890 the Capital City Railway Company introduced electric streetcars and the system



began to grow to serve all parts of the city. Future President Herbert Hoover, who was a teenager living in Salem with his uncle, worked part-time as a streetcar conductor in 1889-91. By 1901 the system had grown to 13.8 miles. But as was the case for most other streetcar systems, the advent of the automobile in the early decades of the new century brought the end of the Salem streetcar in 1927.

It would be wonderful to bring it back!

Salem already has one of the best-preserved downtowns in Oregon that is booming, with a new hotel and many new apartments built and under construction. A streetcar that harkens back to early-day Salem would not only serve downtown residents who don't want to own a car, it could be a terrific tourist attraction like the streetcars in San Francisco and New Orleans. It would also provide a much-needed new connection between West Salem and the rest of the city and would relieve congestion on the two Willamette River bridges.

For all these reasons we need to study the feasibility of "back to the future" streetcar for Salem. I hope you will all support HB 3224.

Jim Schepke