



**House Bill 2662 – Testimony in Support.
Presented in person at the Hearing on
February 21, 2023**

The Association of Oregon Rail and Transit Advocates (AORTA) supports passage of House Bill 2662 to study extending the WES commuter rail service to Salem. This proposed service would offer many social and economic benefits to the region. Here are some of the reasons to approve HB 2662:

1. As I-5 becomes more congested the train becomes an attractive option to driving. Rail infrastructure comes at a lower cost than building urban freeway lanes to add capacity. Once upgraded, it is easy to add rail capacity with longer trains and additional trains.
2. Addresses equity issues by providing mobility options for low income, disabled, students and others unable to drive and/or own a motor vehicle.
3. Takes advantage of latent capacity by upgrading existing infrastructure without negatively impacting the tax base.
4. Provides access to jobs along the route. Gives businesses a larger region for workforce growth.
5. Connects with local transit linking Marion, Polk, Lincoln and Yamhill counties for better regional access.
6. Train travel is psychologically more attractive than riding buses. People who will not ride a bus will choose to go by train. They will even ride a bus to connect to the train, thus generating more patronage on the connecting bus lines. There will be a significant increase in ridership over the current 1X Bus operated by Cherriots and SMART.
7. It will reduce travel time by eliminating the bus/train transfer at Wilsonville and I-5 congestion.
8. Safety issues will be addressed with infrastructure improvements and more public education. Areas in Salem like Front Street and the Northeast district need to receive special attention.
9. Parking is not required for people arriving by transit. This reduces the employee and guest parking requirements for businesses and public agencies, providing citizen access to the State Capitol and other government offices.
10. Tourism is an overlooked benefit of rail transit. Recreational riders will spend money with local businesses and restaurants.
11. Freight trains will operate more efficiently and safely using the upgraded track and signal system.
12. Supports development of the Port of Willamette freight transload facility at Brooks.

If there are concerns about Tri-Met extending to Salem with WES, this doesn't have to happen. WES is operated by the Portland & Western Railroad under a contract with Tri-Met. The extension to Salem could be under a separate contract with Cherriots and/or SMART or even a new state agency to operate the entire system.

As a passenger transportation/tourism professional with over 50 years of management experience in the industry, I urge passage of this legislation.

Robert E. Krebs, AORTA, Immediate Past President
Former: Cherriots' Board Director, ODOT Passenger Rail Coordinator and Oregon
Business Owner