

Submitter: Paul Diller
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Joint Committee On Transportation
Measure: HB2662

Dear Co-Chairs Gorsek and McLain, Vice Chairs Boquist and Boshart Davis, and Members of the Committee:

It is with great enthusiasm and as a longtime commuter along the corridor affected by House Bill 2662 that I write in favor of it.

At the moment, the only frequent and reliable public transit between the Portland metropolitan area and the Salem area is provided by Wilsonville's SMART, in conjunction with Cherriots, which are both smaller transit agencies not designed to connect the largest metropolitan area in the state with the state capital. SMART and Cherriots partner in offering the 1X, which only recently (fall of 2019) expanded to offer mid-day rides. The 1X does not offer weekend service. SMART also recently added the 80X, which runs between Wilsonville and Keizer, stopping in Woodburn. SMART and Cherriots do a tremendous job offering these services in their existing capacities along I-5, but rail would be much better. As it is, any traffic delays on I-5, which are often caused by overturned semi's, affect both the north- and southbound bus operations on the route. An accident on I-5 north affects southbound service (and vice versa) because the same buses are used for both. Hundreds if not thousands of commuters rely on this corridor for their commutes. Convenient, affordable, and reliable rail transportation on a dedicated right of way would offer commuters and others significant relief from the stress of commuting, and open the door for further economic growth to the communities along the corridor, both metro areas, and the entire state. Taking more cars and buses off of this crucial stretch of highway will also free up the corridor for truckers transporting goods up and down the West Coast.

I urge the committee to look to our neighbor to the north, Seattle, which is greatly expanding its intercity light rail network. Portland, by contrast, has stalled over the last several years since last adding the Orange line to Milwaukie in 2015, even as the region and state have seen further growth. To remain economically competitive, this state needs to offer high-quality, affordable, and reliable public transportation. An extension of WES to Salem, or at least a formal state study of that possibility, would be a great first step.

Sincerely,
Paul A. Diller
Wilsonville, Ore.