



American Planning Association
Oregon Chapter

Creating Great Communities for All

February 21, 2023

Joint Committee On Transportation
Senator Chris Gorsek, Co-Chair
Representative Susan McLain, Co-Chair
Senator Brian Boquist, Co-Vice-Chair
Representative Shelly Boshart Davis, Co-Vice-Chair

RE: Testimony from the Oregon Chapter of the American Planning Association (OAPA) in Support of House Bill 2662

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

The Oregon Chapter of the American Planning Association (OAPA) appreciates the opportunity to provide comments in support of HB 2662 related to extending the Westside Express Service commuter line to Salem.

OAPA is a nonprofit professional membership organization of over 800 planners and those who work with planning in formulating and implementing development and conservation policies at the state and local level. OAPA works to create sustainable and vibrant Oregon communities through professional development, advocacy for sound planning, providing resources to meet the challenges of growth and change, and embracing and promoting diversity, inclusion and equity.

Our support of HB 2662 stems from the OAPA priority policy that "Oregon Needs To Act Now To Confront Climate Change". We know that climate change impacts every Oregonian. Oregon is experiencing rising temperatures and extreme heat; drought; extreme precipitation and flooding; wildfires; rising sea levels; vegetation changes; ocean acidification; and slope stability. All over the state these events are impacting homes and businesses; economies; public infrastructure; and public health.

"The rail network, for both passengers and freight, produces lower GHG emissions than roadway and air transportation, which means that shifting trips from road and air to rail in markets where it makes sense can reduce overall transportation emissions" (Federal Railroad Administration - [railroads.dot.gov](https://www.railroads.dot.gov)).

OAPA supports legislation, such as HB 2622, to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions through increased equitable access to sustainable and reliable transit including commuter and passenger rail.

OAPA recognizes the importance, as described in the American Planning Association [Climate Policy Guide](#) (Dec. 2020) of strategically investing in all transit options, including rapid bus transit, self-propelled light rail, streetcars, commuter trains, and heavy rail systems to suit the specific needs of each part

of the region. We would ask this this be a premise of HB 2622.

OAPA also asks that HB 2622 address two critical issues raised by the Federal Railroad Administration - railroads.dot.gov):

1. "Rail's reliance on diesel fuel leaves a large challenge in reducing GHG emissions from the rail industry. Transforming railroad power to clean and renewable fuels is critical in responsibly protecting the environment. Shifting the propulsion and general operation of locomotives from traditional energy to sustainable fuel sources will be beneficial to the health of the rail industry and our planet."
2. "The rail industry is vulnerable to climate-related weather events and must address the issue of infrastructure resiliency. [Rail] investments should be built to withstand the effects of climate change. Adverse conditions, such as excessive heat, flooding, sea-level rise, tornadoes, hurricanes, and wildfires are exacerbated by climate change and threaten the safety and reliability of the rail network."

Again, we thank you for the opportunity to express OAPA's support of HB 2622.

Sincerely,



Aaron Ray, AICP ([he/him/his](#)) <president@oregonapa.org>

President, Oregon Chapter of the American Planning Association
Relevant Resources, Better Planners, Exceptional Communities