

As a council representative for Oregon, to the national rail-advocacy organization Rail Passengers Association (RPA), I am testifying in support of **HB 2662**, which requires the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) to study extending Portland's Westside Express Service (WES) train to Salem and increasing its frequency. RPA's goals include improving and expanding conventional intercity passenger train service, increasing connectivity among all forms of transportation, and improving safety for rail passengers.

This extension of WES service, if implemented, would fulfill all three of those goals. Extending the route would increase the area the train serves, and would connect with local public transit services along the route, most notably Cherriots, Salem's public transit. And when new routes are added, ridership on connecting routes also goes up.

Residents of Portland frequently travel to Salem, and vice versa, and most of this travel occurs on busy highway Interstate 5, creating traffic congestion and delays and increasing the risk of high-speed crashes when traffic is flowing freely. Train travel along this route would be safer, faster, and more environmentally friendly, as rail is the most fuel-efficient form of transportation.

Furthermore, experience has shown that when additional frequencies are added to existing routes, revenues rise faster than costs, showing that in the long run, this extension would actually reduce the cost of running this service, saving taxpayer money.

I urge the Oregon legislature to pass this bill as a first step toward implementing expanded service for WES.