



**Senate Bill 846 – Written Testimony in Support.
Supplements my in person comments at the Hearing on
February 23, 2023**

The Association of Oregon Rail and Transit Advocates (AORTA) supports passage of Senate Bill 846 to study using rail corridors, in Metro, for potential passenger train operations. Passenger rail service, if implemented along some of these corridors, would offer many social and economic benefits to the region. There are communities outside the boundaries of Metro, such as McMinnville, Newberg, St. Helens and Clark County Washington that should be included in the study. Here are some of the reasons to approve SB 846:

1. Congestion on the Highway 99W corridor makes the train an attractive option to driving. There are a multitude of signalized intersections on this route which make for frustrating drive times. Trains operating along this corridor have the potential of offering shorter travel times than driving.
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. Rail infrastructure comes at a lower cost than the construction required to add capacity and reduce signal impediments on regional highways. Once upgraded, it is easy to add rail capacity with longer trains and additional trains.
4. Provides access to jobs along the route. Gives businesses a larger region for workforce growth.
5. Connects with local and intercity transit for better regional access.
6. It will reduce travel time along some corridors because trains don't have to stop for traffic lights.
7. Safety issues will be addressed with infrastructure improvements and more public education.
8. Parking is not required for people arriving by train. This reduces the employee and guest parking requirements for businesses and public agencies.
9. Tourism is an overlooked benefit of rail transit as recreational riders spend money with local businesses and restaurants. The McMinnville line could support wine country tours and possibly be extended to Spirit Mountain Casino.
10. It reduces the number of motor vehicles entering congested areas. Fewer vehicle miles travelled reduces greenhouse gas emissions.
11. 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.

12. Infrastructure and scheduling improvements would enable freight trains to operate more efficiently and safely using the upgraded track and signal system.

These commuter rail lines, including the WES extension to Salem, would function as regional services with multiple stops. This type of service supplements and offers connections to intercity long distance, higher speed trains. The relationship to high-speed corridors is like that of I-5 to Highways 99E and 99W.

If any of the commuter rail plans move forward, a new state agency should be established to manage the regional rail network since existing transit agencies have limited geographical service areas.

There is reference material available covering some of these routes in ODOT's ***Oregon Rail Policy and Plan 1992***. Even though the cost estimates are out of date, Pages 5-1 through 5-17 titled ***Willamette Valley Interurban Service***, show what might be accomplished using these lines.

As a passenger transportation/tourism professional with over 50 years of management experience in the industry, I urge passage of this legislation. Furthermore, I suggest the scope of the study be expanded to include communities outside Metro that would benefit from this service.

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