

Submitter: Michael Hangland-Skill  
On Behalf Of:  
Committee: Joint Committee On Transportation  
Measure: HB2662

I support the state studying the extension of WES to Salem from Wilsonville, and the potential future expansion of regional rail throughout the Willamette Valley. People 100 years ago had better public transportation in the Valley than we do today. Electric interurban railways used to spread far and wide, from Portland to Aurora, McMinnville, Salem, Corvallis, and beyond. This bill, I believe, is a great first step in a new era of transportation in Oregon, one that looks vaguely familiar to the past.

While I was student in Newberg, OR, I often wished I could still take the old interurban trains back to Portland instead of driving. Today, as a resident of Clackamas County, I still see the potential for regional rail to benefit our state. By studying the expansion of WES and potentially transferring its governance from TriMet to a new entity, I believe we can create a new backbone of regional rail service in the Willamette Valley. From there, we can potentially gain right-of-way to serve more communities—those who saw the same rail service 100 years ago.

Of course, the Willamette Valley looks very different than it did 100 year ago. We are almost entirely car dependent: Our suburban development and subsequent freeway expansions have induced demand for private car travel that both strains our infrastructure and threatens our climate. Oregon should be serious about reducing vehicle miles traveled and this is one way to achieve that goal.

Finally, as a member of generation-z, I and most others in my age range are ditching cars for walkable, transit connected cities. Oregon should be building the transportation system of tomorrow, and that includes prioritizing non-car infrastructure. Today, that step looks like supporting this first step towards a regional rail system in the Willamette Valley.

Sincerely,  
Michael Hangland-Skill, 25  
Happy Valley, OR