



OREGON HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

February 28, 2023

Co-Chair Senator Gorsek
Co-Chair Representative McLain
Co-Vice Chair Senator Boquist
Co-Vice Chair Representative Boshart Davis
Members of the Joint Committee on Transportation
Oregon State Capitol
900 Court St. NE
Salem, OR 97301

Co-Chair Gorsek, Co-Chair McLain, Co-Vice Chair Boquist, Co-Vice Chair Boshart Davis:

I am Tom Andersen, State House Representative for District 19: South Salem, south of the Capitol to the Salem city limits. I come before you today to testify in favor of HB 3224, a bill allocating funds to conduct a feasibility study for a Salem Streetcar.

We need a Feasibility Study to determine if streetcar transit is a viable and practical urban circulator for downtown, West Salem, and the adjoining neighborhoods. I was first made aware of the potential in a streetcar by community leaders during my time on Salem City Council when I worked with my colleagues to improve the multi-modal ways that members of our community got around Salem. With municipal, county, and state elected officials, we enhanced the ability for people to commute by bicycle - I'm proud of that work and am happy to say that I am now able to commute everywhere in Salem by bike and as many of you know, I already do. Towards the end of my time on counsel, we commissioned a Salem Congestion Relief Taskforce to understand how our population is growing, how to meet the demands that population increase would create, and how we can continue making Salem a place where families thrive.

The Salem Congestion Relief Taskforce – their October 2018 Final Report can be found in supporting materials printed out for you – identified an exponential growth pattern in our population from West Salem, through the city center and my district, all the way to East Salem and I-5. Recently, the “Our Salem: Planning for Growth” comprehensive plan update confirmed this reporting that nearly 60,000 people are to be added to Salem’s population through 2035.

Specifically, the task force made it clear that congestion and vehicular mobility continue to plague the downtown and west Salem areas. Within their suggested mitigations, the taskforce recommended the creation of a hard rail circulator system.



I'm asking you to consider and support studying streetcar transit as a potential tool for improving local circulation, supporting sustainable community and economic development, and complementing other components of regional transportation systems.

There are three problems that make a Salem Streetcar the ideal transit system to explore now:

- 1) There are two separate business districts that must be connected to the residential, governmental, healthcare, and educational centers that exist in Salem.
- 2) The population is growing here in Salem and we need more affordable and accessible options for getting around the city.
- 3) Future transit must augment current ways that people get around while also meeting the challenge of the current climate crisis and reduce harm to the environment.

The streetcar is an ideal solution that will address these problems. The modern electric streetcar is a unique mode of transit that complements more conventional modes such as commuter rail, light rail, or bus rapid transit. These traditional transit modes primarily serve longer travel, often serving commuter trips from outlying areas to employment centers. Streetcars primarily function as an urban circulator and as a pedestrian accelerator, supporting "walkable and bikeable urbanism" within downtown and adjoining neighborhoods. The typical streetcar trip is not the commute to work, although many of the new residents in West and East Salem will use it for the purpose of commuting to work downtown, at the Capitol, to the hospital, and Willamette University.

Also included in meeting materials before you is a feasibility study for a streetcar in Cincinnati, Ohio. Local leaders studied the feasibility a downtown modern electric streetcar – that study resulted in a streetcar that operates there today. A 2019 study in Oregon found that combined across all household members, households make 8.9 daily weekday trips on average, spending a combined 3 hours a day (or 12% of their day) traveling a total of 61 miles. The overwhelming majority of those trips are not from home to work and back. Other trips include lunch, dinner or social activities, trips between business locations for mid-day meetings, shopping, and visitors circulating between hotels and major destinations. A streetcar would make it much more convenient and practical for users to take conventional transit for their work trip, or even to drive to work or other locations, "park once" and use the streetcar circulator for other trips while here in Salem. These are the types of trips that a streetcar is designed to capture.

Even more exciting, a streetcar would increase the number of jobs and opportunities for advanced, on-the-job apprenticeships for Oregonians in the building and construction trades. I'm talking about members and apprentices working in or advancing their training to make family sustaining wages.

An initial Feasibility Study will identify and evaluate

- potential streetcar transit corridors and technologies,
- assess major engineering impacts related to bicycle, vehicle, and pedestrian traffic, parking and utilities,

- estimate transportation and economic development benefits,
- develop preliminary capital and operating cost estimates,
- identify the environmental benefits a streetcar would have,
- identify ideal materials to use in the building of a streetcar system, and
- identify a set of financing and implementation options.

In closing, I would like to draw your attention to the -1 Amendment that we filed which changes the study from an ODOT-conducted study to one that is conducted by the Salem Area Transit Authority known as Cherriots. Cherriots is best positioned to conduct a study and could do so with its current staff, at a lower cost to taxpayers, and include the municipality in a way that complements the focus of a Salem Streetcar. The -1 Amendment further stipulates that \$250,000 be allocated, that the funds be available upon passage of the legislation, and that Cherriots, in consultation with other agencies, complete the study by 2025.

Together with this -1 Amendment, House Bill 3224 is necessary to get Salem moving. A feasibility study is an important step to understand how streetcars can meet demands for carbon reduction while building environmentally friendly, walkable and bikeable neighborhoods on local transit systems in response to a growing population, create multi-modal, affordable, and accessible transit for all who live here. A win-win for reducing harm to our environment, bolster our local economy, and providing family wage jobs.

While I will always prefer my bicycle, other modes of transportation must be part of the mix. Future transit across Oregon must be environmentally and economically just. This bill would allow us to explore that here in Salem.

I would like to thank Travel Salem, Salem Health, residents of the City of Salem, Climate Solutions, and those you will hear from shortly for testifying today. Together, we can make the world a better place.

Thank you, members of the committee, for your time and consideration. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

Sincerely,



Tom Andersen
State Representative
South Salem, HD-19