

**Testimony on SB 1572**  
**Before the Joint Transportation Committee**

**Co-Chairs Sen Gorsek and Rep McClain, members of the Joint Transportation Committee:**

Please **pass SB 1572**. Oregon will realize improved return on investment when we extend Westside Express (WES) to Salem, and increase frequency and hours of service. WES provides faster travel time between Beaverton and Wilsonville than single occupant vehicles (SOVs).

Extending WES to Salem on underutilized, existing infrastructure is far more cost-effective than adding expensive lanes, rebuilding overpasses and interchanges on congested roadways – roadways we admit we cannot afford to maintain. Public transportation is a safe, economical, environmental and equitable way to improve mobility. Road expansion is not.

**CCI** In the 1970s Oregon Republican Governor Tom McCall, concerned about state employees getting to Salem during the energy crisis, requested Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) address the issue. In response to the Governor’s request ODOT helped to create a 501(c)(3) private, non-profit, **Commuter Club, Inc. (CCI)**. Most, but not all riders, were state employees. Riders included the late State Senator and Majority Leader Dick Springer, Secretary of State Phil Keisling, and many other state employees as well as employees in the private sector. Long after the energy crisis was over CCI took many vehicles off the congested corridor, allowing productive use of time during the commute.

I served on the CCI Board of Directors and as a volunteer van driver on the route serving Beaverton, Tualatin and Salem. I am intimately familiar with the traffic congestion and need for improved transit. Passengers often needed to arrive earlier, and depart later than the once daily roundtrip provided. Frequency is essential to sustain ridership. CCI operated as many as three full sized motorcoaches - sometimes a combination of buses and vans. Unfortunately, CCI was dissolved in 2021.

**Washington Square Task Force** In 1999-2001 I was appointed to and served on the Washington Square Regional Center Plan Task Force. Issues addressed included congestion on Highway 217 and other nearby arterials. Many Task Force members, especially those who resided in the area, recognized the adverse neighborhood impact, futility, and high cost of expanding pavement. We sought to emphasize cost-effective public transit. We were, to some extent, successful in slowing down the insatiable appetite for more pavement. Single occupant vehicles (SOVs) are inefficient in terms of land use.

Devoting more land to the movement of SOVs inevitably leads to longer driving distances, more traffic, and displaces land needed for meaningful human pursuits. Sprawl increases costs in the public **and** private sectors – infrastructure and operations costs – cost the Legislature knows we cannot meet.

Today we waste money expanding Highway 217. Moving pinch points from one place to another does **not** solve traffic congestion. We need to recognize - traffic congestion is not so much a problem to be “solved” as it is a symptom of over-reliance on roadway transport, inefficient in terms of land use, energy and lives. Instead, we need to use congestion as a tool to help the public understand the inherent advantages of public transportation.

If a fraction of the funds used to expand pavement were redirected to improve public transportation **to move people** (WES is an excellent example) we would reduce travel times, maintenance costs, carbon emissions, energy consumption, health care costs, traffic fatalities ... without wasting more land.

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