

Submitter: Jordan Lewis  
On Behalf Of:  
Committee: Joint Committee On Transportation  
Measure: SB1572

Hello Joint Committee on Transportation,

I'm testifying in favor of Senate Bill 1572, which would direct ODOT to study extending Trimet's WES commuter rail from Wilsonville to Salem, and to increase operating hours and frequency. I think we have a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to seize on an underutilized freight corridor which can provide competitive service with driving trips. The biggest problem is that, currently, WES service is much too infrequent (every 45 minutes since COVID), only operates at odd hours (during peak commute hours only), and between destinations that no one has any reason to visit (mostly suburban office parks and parking lots).

COVID and mass work-from-home have disrupted travel patterns, with less people commuting from suburbs to offices and more people taking leisure trips or appointments throughout the day (Trimet knows this and has been altering service through the Forward Together concept to serve more diverse kinds of trips).

Day-long service between Beaverton and Salem, with stops in communities such as Woodburn & Keizer, could be transformative for local communities, many of whom have historically been excluded from jobs in the Portland/Salem area, and who will need reliable transportation alternatives as congestion slows down i-5 in the future.

The state should consider buying this trackage off Portland & Western Railroad, as it does not see much freight traffic (in publicly available FRA documents, around 7-12 non-WES trains run this corridor north of Wilsonville every day). Most freight rail traffic comes from the east, not the south; and

what little comes from the south travels east of the Willamette River anyways. This track only serves a few small users in Washington County who could easily be negotiated with.

This track could provide real transportation for the growing Mid-Willamette Valley rather than lie mostly unused. Perhaps we could even be studying expanding the Right-of-Way and adding MAX Light Rail Service south to Washington Square, Tigard, and the proposed MLB development at the Red Tail golf course site.

There are massive climate, equity, and traffic safety benefits we are leaving on the table by not studying this today. This bill would be a major win for the state of Oregon and I don't think there is any sort of downside! Please move forward and pass SB 1572 today!

Thank you for your time,

Jordan Lewis