



350PDX  
3625 N. Mississippi Avenue  
Portland, OR 97227  
350pdx.org

**Re: Support SB 1572, WES commuter rail to Salem Study**

February 15, 2024

Dear Co-Chairs Gorsek and McLain, Co-Vice Chairs Boquist and Boshart Davis, and members of the Joint Committee on Transportation,

Thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony in support of SB 1572, which would authorize a study of the possibility of extending the Westside Express Service (WES) commuter line to Salem. I serve as the climate policy manager at 350PDX, a grassroots environmental nonprofit with thousands of members in the Portland area, advocating for climate justice.

We support SB 1572, which would consider various aspects of whether it is workable, financially sound, and useful to extend the WES commuter rail beyond its current end point in Wilsonville to Salem. An extension of this passenger rail line would make use of an existing railway line, which is important as it would not require displacing individuals or communities. Extending passenger rail access would allow a useful opportunity to navigate between Portland and Salem, connected to points between. This could reduce traffic congestion, reduce air pollution, and create greater opportunities not only for commuting between cities, but also for traveling for appointments and other visits. Having an affordable way to travel that length of the I-5 corridor other than driving would be particularly useful if tolling is put in place.

We are generally in support of public transit and rail projects, which offer many benefits in reducing our state's climate change impacts and developing a more equitable and accessible community. While Oregon's urban areas have public transit options, we need to work much harder on offering accessible, affordable, and convenient public transit and rail options between cities and towns.

We encourage those conducting this study to pay particular attention to ensuring this rail line would be affordable to low-income Oregonians, that it would run often enough to be convenient, and that it takes into account environmental and climate impacts. Thank you for your attention to this matter and we look forward to you voting yes on HB 1572, then hearing the results of this study.

Cherice Bock  
Climate Policy Manager  
350PDX

Building the climate justice movement.