



February 28, 2017

Representative Caddy McKeown, Chair
House Committee on Transportation Policy
900 Court Street NE, Room 431
Salem, Oregon 97301

RE: Support for HB 2745 – Transit Funding

Chair McKeown and Members of the Transportation Policy Committee:

I am writing today to urge you to support HB 2745, which will give voters in Central Oregon a choice on whether their areas should fund a public transit system.

As the Executive Director of Bend Park and Recreation District, I strive to provide parks and recreation services to the residents of the greater Bend area. The greatest hurdle to reaching seniors, youth, and vulnerable populations, such as residents who struggle with homelessness, is transportation. In Bend, a fixed route system has begun to help solve some residents' transportation needs by providing an alternative for people to reach our services. This service, however, is inadequate.

As an employer of more than 400 employees, most of which are part time and low paid employees, we are concerned about the rising cost of living. Among these costs is transportation. The same improved fixed route system that would transport residents of Bend to recreation programs will also help get employees to work, health care, and to other services that are critical in supporting a healthy workforce.

The model that is taking shape in Bend is somewhat different than a traditional transportation district model. Given that Central Oregon has one large city surrounded by smaller communities, it is unlikely that the traditional model of forming a district with equal taxation across the district will ever work in central Oregon as the needs for Bend are quite different than those for Madras, Sisters or La Pine. Gaining the flexibility to form one regional district with the ability to modify a tax rate based on the needs of local communities could become a future model for communities across Oregon. We believe that we have found a mechanism that will fit the needs of central Oregon and are now asking for the structure to put it in place.

A clarification to ORS190 offers a number of benefits to our Central Oregon Communities. It gives them local control -- each city can choose the appropriate level of service, funding amount, and tool for funding transit in their community. It maximizes efficiency, by retaining regional management for the transit system, minimizing costs and optimizing streamlined and convenient service. It drives economic development, helping local companies attract workers by giving employees a public transportation option that saves time and money. Some communities may choose to ask voters to support funding initiatives, and other communities may not

play for life

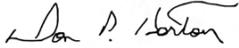
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be ready any time soon. Giving Central Oregon communities the option to seek transit funding from voters is important to our region.

I strongly encourage the House Transportation Committee to move HB 2745 forward and support its passage this session.

Yours Truly,



Don Horton, Executive Director
Bend Metro Park and Recreation District



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