



NeighborImpact

Supporting People, Strengthening Communities.

February 28, 2017

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

RE: HB 2745 – Transit Funding

Chair McKeown and Members of the Committee:

I am pleased to enter a letter into the record expressing solidarity with the goal of expanding options in Central Oregon to support, sustain and expand public transit in our region. Our understanding is that HB2745 is currently being heard in committee, and it is further our understanding that this bill would provide important mechanism for potentially stabilizing funding for our still nascent transit system. Our understanding is that this legislation creates option for local communities to sustain their transit operations while avoiding the need for pursuing the one-size-fits all approach funding which current law regarding creation of transit districts would impose. We believe that this makes sense in the context of public support for transit in our diverse which includes highly urbanized communities like Bend and less urbanized areas such as rural Crook and Jefferson Counties. Simply put, the legislation as proposed would allow communities to engage in local processes regarding the relative value of transit and to contribute funding to a regional transit system as their citizens come to understand the importance and value of this service.

NeighborImpact is the Community Action Agency representing Central Oregon, and our experience that maintain transit services is vital to the approximately 60,000 residents that we serve annually. Low-income Central Oregonians use the transit service to access employment, education, medical services and for other reasons. I remember not too many years ago when we used to host a regional Project Connect event which offered one-stop services to the homeless seeing people walk the 16 miles from Bend to Redmond or from Prineville to Redmond to access services. They were that desperate for free showers, hot

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United Way
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meals and most importantly medical and dental services. Since that time, with the advent of well-developed transit, much burden has been alleviated for residents least able to access transportation. I also remember in the late-2000s and early 2010s, when gas prices soared, the challenges that faced many workers in balancing household budgets in the face of soaring gas prices. We could hardly keep enough busses on the roads at that time to meet demand. Gas prices have since come down (although they appear to be on the rise again) but the habit of using transit for work and school, formed during a difficult economic period, endured for many residents. Today, the transit system offers an important means of helping address budget woes of many households constrained by extreme housing costs.

The loss of transit due to lack of sustainable funding would be catastrophic to Central Oregon's growth. It would damage our efforts to create equity throughout our region. By contrast, the elegant solution offered through HB2745 would seem to create new funding options for communities.

We strongly urge you to take appropriate legislative action to preserve and protect the integrity of transit offering throughout Oregon.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Scott R. Cooper". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline.

Scott Cooper
Executive Director
NeighborImpact