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Senator Lee Beyer and Representative Caddy McKeown,

Ted Stonecliffe, Transit Planner II, Transportation Development Division of Cherriots transit system presented me an invitation to testify at the Capitol in front of the Joint Committee for Transportation Preservation and Maintenance to express my support for the additional money needed for transit. Unfortunately, my disability and transportation barrier prevent me from appearing in person; therefore, I am submitting a written testimonial.

The Upper North Santiam Canyon consists of six notable city-communities (Mehama, Lyons, Mill City, Gates, Detroit, and Idanha) and two outlying communities (Little North Fork/Elkhorn and Marion Forks). We are an extreme rural area split by the North Santiam River between Linn and Marion Counties. Our remote area and diverse geographic nature pose obstacles to police protection, funding availability, and transportation options. The homeless, vulnerable, isolated, seniors, and the disabled cannot get out to jobs, medical care, court, or to do shopping! Does anyone realize the impact on the rural communities? Currently, Cherriots Salem-Keizer Transit provides two Upper Canyon weekday routes via Gates (leaving 5:41 a.m. and 12:41 p.m.; arriving 12:08 p.m. and 7:08 p.m.). Prior routes via Gates provided three weekday routes (leaving 5:48 a.m., 9:30 a.m., and 3:35 p.m.; arriving 8:53 a.m., 2:53 p.m. and 6:57 p.m.). These did not and do not meet Upper Canyon needs!

I have been a resident of Mill City since June of 1976. In 41 years, I have witnessed many changes- the worst of all a seclusion of the Canyon residents for lack of transportation. Age, disability, homelessness, domestic violence, poverty all lend to a need for public assistance and transit. Rural communities depend on outside resources for medical needs (specialists, radiology, treatments), government appointments (social security, jury duty, WIC), grocery shopping on a budget, finding employment, or just to socialize. I am one of the disabled/non-drivers who could use transport for independence. In addition, the Canyon Crisis and Resource Center has at least 17 people a month that are in immediate need to get out of the Canyon into shelter of some type. Non-victim calls are for a variety of needs- jobs, housing, housing assistance, and transportation usually 120 to 140 a month.

According to Salem-Keizer Regional Transit Volume I of SKT Regional Plan 2016, the Regional Network was “established in the 1980s by Oregon Housing and Associated Services as a transportation service for elderly and disabled people.” Over the last 30 plus years funding has

changed and without representation on the transit board the rural canyon has lost connectivity to needed urban resources. In the beginning we had vouchers to give those who really needed to ride the bus but that ended after a while! Even the Oregon Special Transportation Fund (STF), federal funds for seniors and people with disabilities, and federal funds for rural areas have failed to help those in need. Urban populace directs need and extremely rural fall prey to the needs of the plenty.

A community meeting was held on September 13, 2016 to discuss the need to retain the Upper Canyon routes via Cherriots. At that meeting, a lack of funding to cover Linn county residents was forefront with the majority of the population residing there. Marion/Polk funds a large part of the run. Testimony was given by advocates for veterans, individuals directly affected, and government officials. We still lost services. On January 25, 2017 an Upper Santiam Canyon Communities Needs Assessment identified 65 families/individuals as homeless. A portion of these people could also use transit.

I urge the Joint Committee for Transportation Preservation and Maintenance to consider all areas of our state when deciding on funding. We are a land of urban and rural, metropolitan and rustic. The Upper North Santiam Canyon is a destination for camping, hiking, rafting and more. It is also home to retirees, veterans, families, and commuting workers. Some choose to reside here; others are relocated by public agencies. Regardless of why we live here, the Canyon is our home and we deserve the right to connect! Please consider the perks of tourism, low emissions, and the needs of every Oregonian (young and old; rich and poor; city dweller and hick) when allocating funds. Seclusion is not the answer!

Thank you for your consideration,

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