

*Joint Committee on Transportation Preservation and Modernization  
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## **The Oregon Food Bank Network urges support for transit funding in HB2017**

Over the past few years, the Oregon Food Bank Network has heard increasingly from clients about the need for increased transit services in their communities. Affordable, accessible and robust transit systems can be a lifeline for low-income Oregonians. Without it, our community members and neighbors struggle to get to their jobs, school, doctors' appointments and the grocery store. Many of our urban clients are transit dependent, relying on public transit to get them where they need to go. Our rural clients tell us they wish they had transit service in their communities; they are forced to rely on unreliable cars and friends and neighbors to get them to their destinations. A strong statewide investment in transit would increase transit services in urban and rural areas, giving low-income Oregonians access to the key components to meet their basic needs.

When budgets are tight, Oregonians look for ways to save money and cut down on expenses. Food is often the first place they look to save, and they try to purchase groceries as cheaply as possible. But the closest grocery store may not be the most economical, and our community members are forced to travel far to access affordable food. In these situations, food savings often are swallowed by increased transportation expenses. Our clients often describe this frustrating dynamic to us. In Drain, Christine told us they either could pay \$20 for gas and go to a cheaper grocery store in another community or spend that \$20 on higher food prices in their own town. She wished there was a transit option to get her family to the grocery store where they could stretch their tight food budgets further and not have to allocate those savings entirely to transportation. Our urban clients tell us that this works for them, that public transit makes affordable grocery stores accessible. Linda, a Portlander, told us she takes light rail all the way out to Hillsboro to shop at a low-price grocer because it is so much cheaper than her local store. She's able to save precious dollars on groceries because she has access to an affordable transit system.

Oregonians experiencing hunger also describe the important role transit plays in getting them to their jobs. Unable to afford a car, without buses, they would struggle to get to work every day. However, those with access to transit also describe long commutes and transit systems with limited hours and restricted routes. While grateful for the services, they wished the buses could go further and run more frequently. In Medford, Maria told us the closest bus stop from her job is a mile and a half away. So she walks a mile and a half uphill with a bad leg just to get to work in the morning after the bus drops her off. If she gets off after 7:00 p.m., she is forced to take a taxi home because buses don't run in the evening. To go the three miles by taxi to get home, it costs her \$12-\$15 one way. Willow, a Tigard resident, echoes Maria when she tells us she walks a mile and a half to catch a two hour bus ride to work, works for 12 hours, and then rides the bus two hours and walks that mile and a half back home. Increased service hours and longer routes ensures that Oregonians are able to easily and affordably get to work every day.

The Oregon Food Bank Network urges the Legislature to include funding for statewide transit in HB2017. We've heard from our clients about the important role transit does and could play in their lives. It would allow them access to places like grocery stores and their jobs, making it easier and more affordable for them to meet their basic needs.