



March 11, 2015

Chair Caddy McKeown and Members
House Committee on Transportation and
Economic Development
State Capitol
Salem, OR

Re: HB 2979 and HB 2629 – Youth Transit

Dear Chair McKeown and Committee members:

1000 Friends of Oregon supports HB 2979, which would provide improved access to transit for Oregon youth. We also support HB 2629, though it is more limited in scope to Lane County.

1000 Friends of Oregon is a 40-year old, non-profit, statewide organization. We advocate for livable urban and rural communities, protecting family farms and forests, transportation and housing choice, and conserving natural areas, largely through the implementation and improvement of Oregon's land use planning program.

HB 2979 provides a fund and process by which school districts, transit agencies, and other public bodies may collaborate to design a program to provide more efficient and accessible transit service for high school aged youth, for which the agencies can apply to receive state funding to implement.¹ Implementation can include free or reduced fee youth transit passes and increased bus service levels. HB 2979 is structured so it can be used by transit districts of all sizes.

Where this mechanism has been and currently still is being used, such as in the Portland Public School district, one can see the multiple benefits to the community. In particular, it opens up life chances for many youth for additional learning and career experiences that would otherwise be completely unavailable. Yellow school bus routes are limited in the schedule on which they operate. Making transit accessible to high school youth means they can access community college classes, internships, and employment opportunities during the day without having a parent drive them or having to drive themselves – options that are not even available to most high school students. Students can more easily participate in before and after school activities because they will have transportation. School attendance increases because of the greater options available on transit for when students get to and from school.

The community benefits as well, especially in terms of public health. Travel surveys indicate that 9-15% of U.S. peak-period vehicle travel is due to parents chauffeuring their

¹ HB 2629 provides for a similar program, but just in Lane County.

kids.² Air quality and road congestion will improve because students are using buses that are already on the road, rather than adding automobiles throughout the day.

We urge you to recommend passage of HB 2979. Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mary Kyle McCurdy". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Mary Kyle McCurdy
Policy Director and Staff Attorney

² *Evaluating Household Chauffeuring Burdens: Understanding Direct and Indirect Costs of Transporting Non-Drivers*, Victoria Transport Policy Institute, January 2015.