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'Stop Requested': From Newport to Klamath Falls by public transit

By **Lillian Karabaic** (OPB)

Oct. 20, 2024 6 a.m.

The long way or the railway?



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Editor's note: This is the second in "Stop Requested," OPB's multi-part series about a journey to the corners of Oregon by public transit. The [first part](#) of the series was published Saturday.

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Kathy Gunderson grabs her luggage to board the Coast-to-Valley express from Newport City Hall to Albany Amtrak Station.
Prakruti Bhatt / OPB

Fourteen days, and more than 30 buses — OPB's Lillian Karabaic and Prakruti Bhatt experience the joys and difficulties of rural transit ... and talk to many people along the way.

Sunday Sept. 15

Bus 9: Newport City Hall > Albany Amtrak Station

Benton County Transit Coast-to-Valley Express, \$6, 62 miles

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Benton County Transit District's Coast-to-Valley Express winds through Eddyville, Philomath, Corvallis and ends in North Albany. It's the only public transit on the coast between Tillamook and Florence that heads inland since the 60X route that ran from Lincoln City to Salem was discontinued after the driver retired.

It's a foggy Sunday morning when we arrive at Newport's City Hall and wait for the bus. There's a strong smell of fish in Newport — one of our fellow riders says it “smells like money.”

For \$6, we snag a ride into Albany.

One of the riders is Depoe Bay resident Kathy Gunderson, who's hauling a chunky suitcase. She is going to Albany Amtrak station before heading out on a longer trip.



Depoe Bay resident Kathy Gunderson started riding the bus about three years ago — because it's less stress “[Highway] 126 is kind of scary because the curves,” she says. “Everybody wants to go fast and I'm getting older now and I don't wanna go fast. So it was very, it was very relaxing riding [the bus]...mostly.”

Prakruti Bhatt / OPB

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About three years ago, Gunderson started riding the bus to visit her adult daughters in Eugene. She said it's cheaper than driving, but the big thing for her is that it's less stress.

"[Highway] 126 is kind of scary because the curves," she says. "Everybody wants to go fast and I'm getting older now and I don't wanna go fast. So it was very, it was very relaxing riding [the bus]...mostly."

After Gunderson retired and moved from Florence to Depoe Bay, she gave up her car and switched entirely to the bus. She describes Depoe Bay as her "favorite place ever." She says she eventually might get a car again but for now, but she likes not having a car payment or the stress.

"I live in a little studio and it doesn't have a washer and dryer," she says. "I go, like, once a week to town, like the old stagecoach days to get my staples. I go to the grocery store, to the library, do my clothes and you know, go see the sea lions."

We toss a coin on the bus to decide if we should pass the day in Corvallis or Albany. Tails say Albany, so we ride past Corvallis and disembark with Kathy Gunderson at the Amtrak station, with seven hours to waste until the Coast Starlight train comes to take us to Klamath Falls. We immediately regret our decision to choose Albany over Corvallis, because very little is open in Albany on a Sunday.



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Albany Amtrak station also serves as a bus station for Benton Area Transit's Coast-to-Valley Express bus, and the Albany Transit System's central bus station.

Lillian Karabaic / OPB

The transit system, [Albany Transit System](#), is free, but only runs Monday through Friday — which means we have to carry our heavy backpacks in search of something to do.

But as we walk through downtown we spot signs leading us to the one thing that is open on a Sunday: the Albany Historic Carousel & Museum. Inside is a meticulously restored, hand-carved carousel which is worth appreciating as a work of art. Each wooden animal is hand-carved by local volunteers and takes years to complete in their workspace in the basement. But it's also just plain fun, even for adults.



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Getting all over Oregon is faster by radio waves than by public transit. But, it's more of an adventure on wheels!

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Karabaic and video producer Prakruti Bhatt traveled from The Dalles to Astoria to Lincoln City to Albany. All in, the journey was:

-  455.8 miles
-  10 buses and two trains
-  \$37.50 per person

 by Prakruti Bhatt/OPB (@prakrutib)

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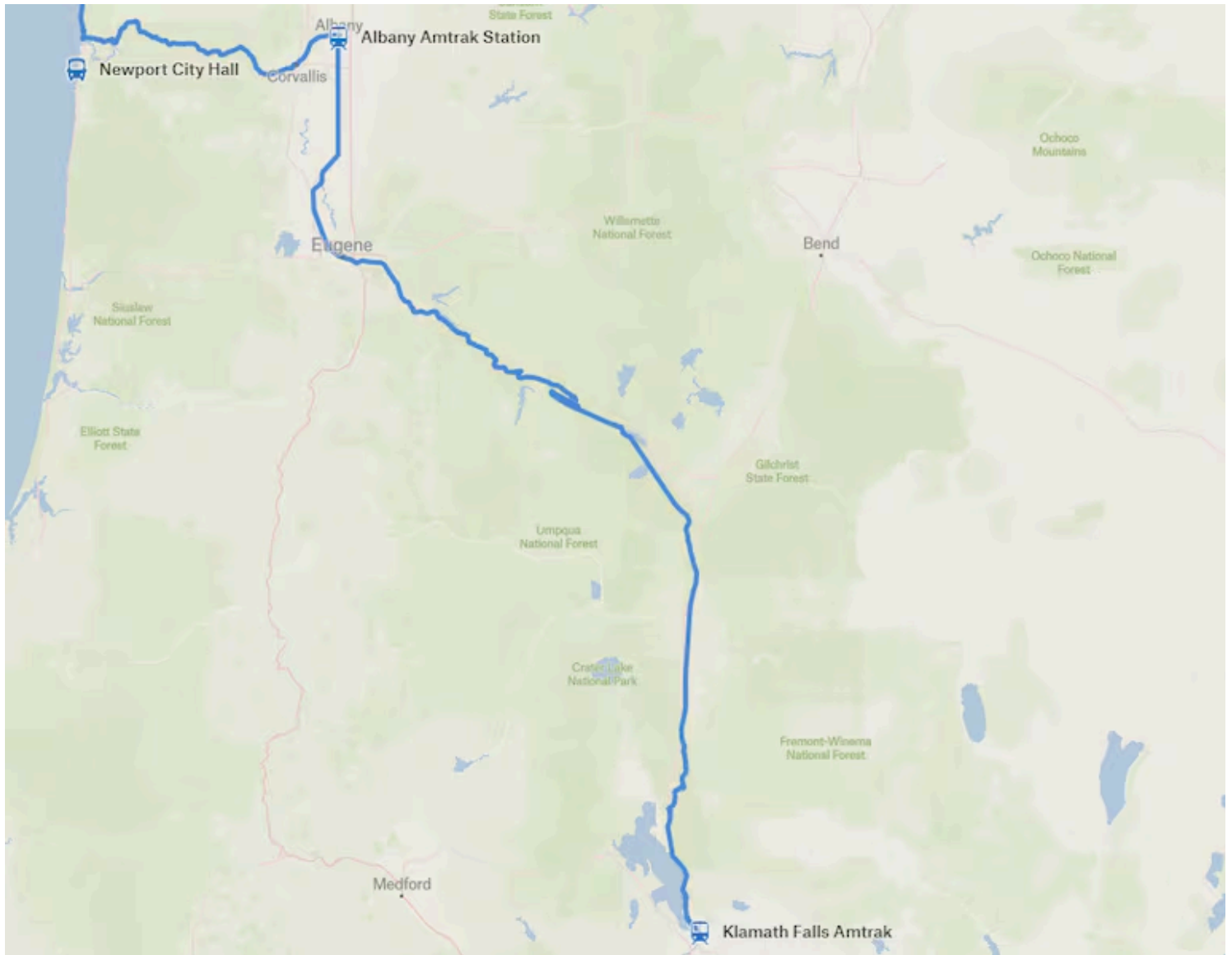
Albany City Council member Ray Kopczynski is the front-door greeter when we walk in. He volunteers at the carousel because “It keeps me sane compared to city council,” said Kopczynski. “It’s nice to be somewhere where everyone is happy.”

The carousel is filled with kids laughing and volunteers giving up their Sunday to be here. “Can you imagine working in a place where everyone wants to be here? It’s just a happy place. Lots of places say that, but this really is,” says our volunteer tour guide, Nancy Tanaguchi.

Train 2: Albany Amtrak Station > Klamath Falls Amtrak Station

Amtrak Coast Starlight, \$32, 238 miles

The Amtrak is the fastest and cheapest way to get to Klamath Falls from Albany via public transit.



We take the easier route between Albany and Klamath Falls: the train. Alternatively, we could've gone out the coast and down to Brookings — which would've taken seven buses and two to four days.

Lillian Karabaic / OPB

There is also the option to go the entire way via local bus service, but that route is significantly slower and ends up costing triple the price of the train, as it requires going back out to the coast.

The Linn-Benton Transit District's [Heart-to-Hub Uniter](#) bus rides from Albany to Corvallis for free. Then Benton Area Transit's [Coast-to-Valley Express](#) (\$5) will connect to the [Lincoln South County](#) (\$4) route to Yachats. Then the Lane Link [Florence to Yachats Connector](#) (\$2.50) will connect to Florence, followed by [Coos County's Florence Express](#) (\$12) to North Bend where you can connect to Curry County's [Coastal Express](#) (\$20) to Brookings.

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The last leg is Oregon POINT's [SouthWest Route](#) (\$57) from Brookings to Klamath Falls. Depending on the day of the week this trip begins, this route will take two to four days.

We opt for the cheaper and easier version, because as we head east from Klamath Falls, things are going to get a lot more complicated.

The ride is uneventful but beautiful as we go through the southern Willamette Valley and the Fremont-Winema National Forest.

We make up the lost time in route and pull into Klamath Falls at 10 p.m., walking directly into the fog.



Arriving at the Klamath Falls Amtrak station on the Coast Starlight train at 10 p.m. on Sept. 15, 2024.

Lillian Karabaic / OPB

Next in the series: We find our way 100 miles from Klamath Falls to Lakeview, Oregon's "mile high city", with a bus full of Top Ramen. And we finally meet a cat named Judge Judy.

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