

Submitter: Bill Kluth  
On Behalf Of: Rogue Valley Transportation District  
Committee: Joint Committee On Transportation Reinvestment  
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB2025

To the Chair, Co-Chair, and Members of the Committee,  
My name is Bill Kluth. I was raised in Eugene, Oregon, and spent 25 years living and working in the Rogue Valley. Though I no longer reside in Oregon, I remain deeply invested in the well-being of its communities, especially through my work in public transportation.

I currently serve as Director of Safety, Training & Operations for Paratransit Services. We are contracted with the Rogue Valley Transportation District (RVTD) to operate the Valley Lift service, which provides critical transportation for individuals with disabilities. As the former General Manager overseeing Valley Lift operations, I witnessed firsthand the life-changing role public transit plays in people's lives, not only for riders, but for entire communities.

It's easy to see the importance of transit for those who depend on it: seniors getting to medical appointments, individuals with disabilities accessing independence, and workers without vehicles reaching their jobs. What's less visible, but just as critical, is the impact on those who don't use transit. Businesses rely on transit to connect them with employees. Emergency rooms see fewer crises when people can access regular care. Roads stay less congested, air stays cleaner, and communities remain connected.

We also know that investing in public transit is not only the right thing to do, it's a smart economic decision. A relevant example comes from a Florida State University study titled the Florida Transportation Disadvantaged Programs: Return on Investment Study. While the focus of the study was medical transportation, its broader implication is clear: transportation access saves money. The study found that for every \$1 invested, the State of Florida saw an \$11.08 savings in healthcare costs alone. It's a powerful example of how public transit systems reduce public expenditures by promoting access to preventive care, stability, and essential services.

But this system is in real danger.

The Statewide Transportation Improvement Fund (STIF) is Oregon's primary state-level investment in transit. Unfortunately, the proposed 0.08% payroll tax increase will not be enough to sustain current service levels. Agencies across the state are facing rising costs, shrinking fare revenues, and new safety demands. Without a meaningful increase in funding, service cuts are inevitable, cuts that will hurt everyone.

The Oregon Transit Association (OTA) has proposed a phased increase to 0.5% by 2033. This is a smart, balanced approach. For someone earning the median Oregon income, this would mean about \$16.75 a month by the final year, a modest cost when compared to the tangible savings and community benefits that will result.

Transit is not charity. It's infrastructure. It's workforce development. It's economic

mobility. It's climate resilience. And it's dignity.

At Paratransit Services, our mission is to provide coordinated transportation and community services that meet the needs of those we are entrusted to serve. The same must be true for Oregon's funding priorities. Without this investment, agencies like TriMet project that as many as 51 of 78 bus lines could disappear by 2031. That is not a future Oregon can afford.

I strongly urge you to support the OTA's recommendation for a phased increase in STIF to 0.5%. The people of Oregon, riders and non-riders alike, deserve a transit system that works for all.

Thank you for your service and thoughtful consideration.

Sincerely,

Bill Kluth

Director of Safety, Training & Operations

Paratransit Services

Former General Manager, Valley Lift

Raised in Eugene, Oregon | 25-Year Resident of the Rogue Valley