

Testimony to the Oregon Legislature – House Bill 2025

*Submitted by Jesus Mendoza, Transportation Operations Manager, The Link Public Transit / Mid-Columbia Economic Development District*

Co-Chairs McLain and Gorsek, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Jesus Mendoza, and I serve as the Transportation Operations Manager for The Link Public Transit, operated under the Mid-Columbia Economic Development District (MCEDD).

Our agency provides public transit service throughout Wasco County, home to just over 26,500 residents. We offer a range of services, including Dial-a-Ride, Deviated-Fixed Route, shopping and South County shuttle services, and intercity service between The Dalles and Hood River. This intercity route is critical for individuals commuting to work, visiting family, or accessing regional connections to Columbia Area Transit (CAT), Skamania County Transit, and Mt. Adams Transportation.

I am here today to express strong support for House Bill 2025.

The proposed increase in funding for the Statewide Transportation Improvement Fund (STIF) will help prevent significant reductions in public transit service across Oregon.

Like many other agencies, MCEDD has been severely impacted by inflation, which has driven up the cost of wages, benefits, fuel, and other operating expenses. In November 2024, we were forced to cut approximately 10% of our Deviated Fixed Route (DFR) service in response to these financial pressures. Without additional state support, we may be forced to make further cuts, including the potential elimination of our DFR service and a reduction in the workforce.

While our service is open to the general public, it primarily supports vulnerable populations: older adults, people with disabilities, low-income individuals, limited English-proficient families, and Native American communities along the Columbia River. Reducing or eliminating service would leave these individuals without access to essential needs like health care, employment, education, food, and recreation.

While this bill will not allow most providers to expand service—and some cuts may still be necessary, the increase in STIF funding will prevent thousands of Oregonians from being stranded without the transportation they rely on every day.

I respectfully urge your support for HB 2025.

Thank you for your time and commitment to Oregon's transit-dependent communities.