

Submitter: Jessica Metta

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Joint Committee On Transportation Reinvestment

Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB2025

Co-Chairs McLain and Gorsek and Members of the Committee,
Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony. Mid-Columbia Economic Development District (MCEDD) as operator of The Link Public Transportation serving Wasco County, submits this testimony in favor of HB 2025. The Link began in 1997 to provide public transportation services to Wasco County citizens. Originally providing only dial-a-ride services, the STIF Formula funding has allowed us to serve more riders with bus routes in The Dalles, service between Hood River and The Dalles, routes to South Wasco County, as well as adding weekend service and more service hours during the week. Our riders are largely low-income, older adults, and people with disabilities who have no other options for transportation.

In addition to transit services, The Link provides emergency response in the event of a wildfire; robust travel training for youth, Veterans, people with disabilities and older adults; low-income fare buy-down programs; free passes for middle and high school students, and much more to support the community who rely on public transportation.

Since 2018 when we began to receive STIF Formula funds, we have seen increases in the costs of buses, fuel, and materials due to inflation; increased labor costs due to health insurance inflation and wage competitiveness; and greater uncertainty of discretionary State and Federal Funding. Increased STIF Formula Funds are necessary for us to maintain our current levels of service. Without a STIF increase, we will face cuts in employment and services, directly impacting those most vulnerable in our community.