

Submitter: Will Green

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Joint Committee On Transportation Reinvestment

Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB2025

I am writing as a Bend community member to urge your immediate passage of House Bill 2025, specifically the critical transit funding provisions that will prevent devastating service cuts across Oregon and enable essential transportation infrastructure development in Central Oregon.

The Economic Case for Transit Investment

House Bill 2025's proposed increase in the Statewide Transportation Improvement Fund (STIF) payroll tax from 0.1% to 0.3% represents sound economic policy with quantifiable returns. The American Public Transportation Association documents that every \$1 invested in transit generates \$5 in economic benefits while creating 50,731 jobs per \$1 billion invested. For the median Oregon worker earning \$40,200 annually, this increase translates to \$16.75 more per month by 2032—significantly less than the \$60 monthly that drivers will pay in gas taxes and vehicle fees under the same package.

Research consistently demonstrates that properties near transit access show 4-24% higher median sale prices for residential properties and 5-42% increases for commercial properties. During the 2006-2011 recession, transit-adjacent homes outperformed regional averages by 41.6% in value retention, indicating economic resilience that benefits entire communities.

Central Oregon's Critical Transportation Challenges

Our region faces unprecedented growth pressures that current transportation infrastructure cannot accommodate. Bend's population has grown over 30% in the past decade, yet Cascades East Transit's fixed-route ridership remains at only 75% of pre-pandemic levels despite achieving overall ridership recovery to 659,692 riders in 2024—surpassing pre-COVID levels.

The projected 50% population growth over the next 20 years cannot be accommodated with 50% more cars. Transit expansion is essential for sustainable growth, workforce mobility, and maintaining our region's economic competitiveness. CET's 2040 Transit Master Plan envisions necessary expansions including northeast Bend service, Deschutes River Woods connections, and restored weekend services—all requiring adequate STIF funding.

Preventing Service Cut Disasters

Without passage of HB 2025, Oregon transit agencies face devastating 30% service cuts. TriMet warns of eliminating up to 51 of its 78 bus lines by 2031. These cuts would strand tens of thousands of Oregonians, including essential workers, seniors

accessing healthcare, and students reaching educational opportunities. Operating costs have increased 53% from 2019 to 2024 due to inflation impacts including 35% increases in fuel and tire costs and 71% increases in facilities maintenance. Meanwhile, STIF funding has not increased since 2017, creating an unsustainable gap between resources and operational needs.

Strategic Economic Benefits for Central Oregon

Transit investment directly supports Bend's recreation and tourism economy, which generated \$383.4 million in visitor spending in 2023 and employs 10,700 people. Cities with airport-to-downtown rail connections see 10.9% more hotel revenue per room than cities without direct transit access.

For our service-industry economy, transit access improves workforce mobility for workers who cannot afford vehicles. Research shows each high-tech job creates 5 additional service economy jobs, and transit connections enable this essential workforce to access employment opportunities across the region.

Oregon State University-Cascades' \$89.9 million annual economic impact benefits from improved workforce accessibility, while our growing brewing industry and outdoor recreation sector require reliable transportation connections to maintain competitiveness.

Climate and Environmental Imperatives

Public transportation saves 4.2 billion gallons of gasoline annually nationwide and prevents \$21 billion in congestion costs. For Oregon's climate goals—reducing transportation emissions 80% below 1990 levels by 2050—transit expansion is essen