

Submitter: Bill Bradley
On Behalf Of: ATU 757
Committee: Joint Committee On Transportation Reinvestment
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB2025

Good afternoon, Co-Chair McLain, Co-Chair Pham, Vice Co-Chair Starr, Vice Co-Chair Boshart-Davis and members of the committee.

My name is Bill Bradley, and I am here today on behalf of the Amalgamated Transit Union, Local 757, representing over 5,000 transit workers across Oregon. ATU Local 757 strongly supports House Bill 2025 and the -A28 amendment. This amendment is crucial as it maintains the incremental increase to 0.3% of payroll for transit funding while significantly reducing the overall cost of the bill.

ATU and transit providers throughout Oregon are united in our support for this proposal. It reflects the clear will of the people; over 60% of public comments received during last year's transportation roadshow advocated for increased transit investment. These voices, echoing from urban, suburban, and rural communities across our state, underscore a shared understanding: transit is not merely convenient, it is essential.

The STIF program, established in 2017, has already sparked remarkable transformation in Oregon's transit landscape. Agencies like Cherriots have been able to add weekend and expanded evening service, broaden access for youth, and witnessed a strong rebound in ridership as they've restaffed and restored services curtailed during the pandemic. These hard-won gains, however, are now in jeopardy without continued and stable funding.

From the labor perspective, our members have been deeply invested in this progress. Since the onset of the pandemic, we have tirelessly collaborated with transit agencies to recruit and train new operators, expand apprenticeship programs, and build robust career ladders for maintenance technicians and frontline staff. This crucial workforce development is only sustainable if service levels, and consequently, funding, remain stable.

ATU is already experiencing the headwinds of federal policy changes, evidenced by the recent announcement of layoffs affecting over 80 workers at the Rogue Valley Transportation District. Such shifts in federal policy, coupled with broader economic uncertainty, make it absolutely imperative for this Legislature to ensure public transit remains reliable and economical for all Oregonians. It's worth noting that transit ridership typically increases during difficult economic times, yet transit systems often struggle to meet this heightened demand. By acting now, you can ensure that this essential service is ready to support our communities should challenging times lie ahead.

The proposed amendment to HB 2025 ensures that transit agencies can effectively hold the line against service cuts, while also allowing the necessary room for future growth, all in a fiscally responsible manner. Investments in transit are investments in our communities: they improve access to work, school, and healthcare, significantly reduce household transportation costs, and ultimately contribute to stronger, more connected communities across Oregon.

We urge you to pass this amendment to House Bill 2025 and preserve the 0.3% funding level that makes these vital outcomes possible.

Thank you for your time and thoughtful consideration.