



2810 Ocean Blvd
Coos Bay, OR 97420
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RE: Testimony in Support of HB 4008 – Transit Funding Task Force

Dear Members of the House Committee on Transportation,

My name is Melissa Metz, General Manager of Coos County Area Transportation District, I come before you not with abstract concerns, but with the harsh reality of what happens when transit funding fails to keep pace with the true costs of providing essential service.

Our Reality: A Transit System in Retreat

In July 2025, our transit system was forced to reduce services by **8%**. Now, we face an additional **18% reduction in July 2026**, which will reduce our operations to just **four days per week** - with only our critical Hwy 101 connector maintaining six-day service.

Let me be clear: these cuts are **not driven by inefficiency**. They are the result of unavoidable cost pressures that every employer in Oregon understands:

- Paying our staff a **living wage with health benefits**
- **Rising facility costs** - rent, utilities, maintenance
- **Passenger amenities** that ensure equity and accessibility
- **System safety** investments that protect riders and operators
- **Vehicle maintenance** that keeps our aging fleets running

These are not luxuries. These are the baseline requirements of running a safe, reliable transit system that serves working families, seniors, students, and people with disabilities.

Despite these constraints, our system continues to deliver significant public value. In the last six months we provisioned 26,732 trips and traversed 135,689 revenue miles. Our service connects coastal residents to critical healthcare, including dialysis, mental health services, rehabilitation, and recovery. We provide seniors and veterans access to medical care, food, and family support, and we connect youth and working families to education, jobs, and essential services. For many of our passengers especially our elderly and disabled residents, we remain one of the only affordable transportation options available.

The Cost of Inaction

When transit service is cut, the consequences ripple through our rural communities:

- **Working families** may be forced to buy or maintain personal vehicles they cannot afford



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- **Seniors and people with disabilities** lose their independence
- **Students** lose their pathway to education
- **Employers** lose access to reliable workers
- **Carbon emissions rise** at a time when Oregon has committed to climate action

A Call for Urgent Action

Governor Kotek has correctly identified transit funding as the one area that "can't be touched" as ODOT navigates its fiscal challenges. But identifying the problem is not enough - we need solutions.

HB 4008 provides the structure to find those solutions. By requiring the task force to report back by December 15, 2026, this bill ensures that findings can inform the 2027 legislative session - when Oregon must finally address its transportation funding crisis comprehensively.

The bill's emergency declaration recognizes what we in transit already know: **this is urgent**. Every day we delay, more service is lost, more riders are stranded, and more damage is done to the networks that took decades to build.

I urge the committee to pass HB 4008 without delay.

Our communities cannot afford another year of cuts. Our riders cannot afford another year of uncertainty. Our state cannot afford to abandon a transportation mode that serves thousands of Oregonians who have no other option.

The Transit Funding Task Force is not just a study - it's a lifeline for transit agencies and the communities we serve.

Thank you for your time and your consideration of this critical legislation.

Submitted by:

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