

REVENUE: No revenue impact

FISCAL: Minimal fiscal impact, no statement issued

Action:	Do Pass
Vote:	8 - 0 - 0
Yeas:	Boone, Esquivel, Freeman, Komp, Matthews, Riley, Weidner, Cowan
Nays:	0
Exc.:	0
Prepared By:	David Molina, Administrator
Meeting Dates:	4/14, 4/30, 5/5

WHAT THE MEASURE DOES: Establishes the Task Force on Veterans Transportation to study methods for creating a statewide transportation system to assist veterans in accessing Veterans Affairs (VA) health care facilities. Sunsets on the first date of the 2011 Legislative Session. Declares emergency, effective on passage.

ISSUES DISCUSSED:

- No reliable statewide transportation system for wheelchair-bound passengers
- Demand currently outstrips supply for a consistent and dependable transportation system to VA medical facilities, especially for veterans in rural and remote parts of the state
- Related measure, Senate Bill 98
- Widespread support among veterans and their dependants, and veterans advocacy organizations
- Congressman DeFazio recognizes the problem, and has prioritized legislation to address this issue

EFFECT OF COMMITTEE AMENDMENT: No amendment.

BACKGROUND: The Governor's Task Force on Veterans' Services Final Report (December 2008) top transportation recommendation was to further study existing transportation networks and strategic partnerships to create a cohesive veterans transportation system. The Task Force learned that access to medical care is one of the most pressing issues facing veterans who live in rural and remote areas of Oregon. It also found a lack of a wheelchair-friendly and dependable transportation system for rural veterans trying to access the VA medical facilities in Portland and Roseburg. The Oregon Department of Veterans Affairs (ODVA) asserts that only 80,000 veterans, out of a total of 350,000 veterans statewide, are enrolled with the U.S. Veterans Affairs (VA) health care system. The Task Force discovered that while Oregon has many existing transportation districts, local bus lines, Department of Human Services medical transportation and community volunteer programs, none are connected routinely or purposely provide services to veterans who are unable to drive to their VA medical appointments. Proponents of the measure assert the need to develop a comprehensive, modern and strategic approach for veterans transportation. Proponents of Senate Bill 98 assert the need for veterans to fully receive their primary and specialty care through an established VA medical facility that reduces both overall state health costs and maximizes federal VA health benefits.

The Task Force on Veterans Transportation created by Senate Bill 98 is to be composed of senior officials from the Departments of Employment, Transportation, Veterans Affairs, Human Services, and the Attorney General's office, respectively. The National Conference of State Legislatures *Report on Coordinated Human Service Transportation* (January 2005) asserts Oregon has no comprehensive coordination statute specific to specialized services with the exception for transportation services for senior citizens and people of disabilities. The Department of Human Services asserts the state's Medicaid clients, both in urban and rural areas, take advantage of a statewide transportation system cost-free.

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This summary has not been adopted or officially endorsed by action of the committee.