



March 18, 2011

House Committee on Revenue
Oregon State Capitol Building
900 Court St. NE, Room
Salem, OR 97301

The Honorable Co-Chairs Barnhart and Berger and Committee Members:

I am writing in support of House Bill 2582. To meet the needs of a rapidly growing population, it is critical that the State provide increased funding for the Special Transportation Fund (STF), which helps support elderly and disabled transportation. These transit services help the State avoid future nursing home and other intensive care costs by enabling people to remain independent.

Nationwide, the baby boom is approaching retirement.

- On January 1, 2011, the first of the Baby Boomers advanced into the ranks of “older adults,” **with nearly 10,000 people turning 65 every day for the next 19 years.**
- In the next 25 years, the Portland region expects the elderly population to grow more than 150%.
- **By 2030, the elderly and people with disabilities will comprise 28% of the population in Oregon.**

Why is this important to TriMet? Transit agencies are obligated under the American’s with Disabilities Act to provide transportation for older adults and people with disabilities. These rides are a lifeline that allows people to get to medical appointments, jobs, and grocery shopping.

Unfortunately, these transportation services are costly. TriMet provides over 1 million on-demand paratransit (LIFT) trips per year and over 10 million trips on fixed route bus and MAX for older adults and people with disabilities. While bus and MAX cost an average of \$2.70 per ride, the LIFT service **costs over \$30 per ride.** Of the **nearly \$31 million spent each year on LIFT,** nearly 80% comes from the TriMet General Fund.

At the same time, transit agencies have been hit hard by the recession. In the past 2 years TriMet has cut more than \$60 million from its budget, which includes:

- Service cuts over nearly 13%
- Three year salary and hiring freeze
- Layoffs - TriMet has reduced staff by more than 120 employees

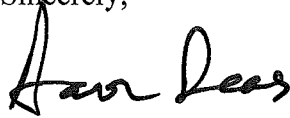
Because of these daunting challenges, TriMet has not been idle. To provide better service and reduce costs, TriMet’s goal has been to attract older adults and people with disabilities to ride fixed-route bus and MAX and we have developed innovative approaches. These include:

- Creation of an assessment center to ensure riders are getting the appropriate services
- Removal of environmental barriers including added bus shelters at stops near senior centers and improved bus stops for wheelchairs
- Automating stop announcements on buses and trains
- Producing easy to understand customer information
- Providing free travel training and individual transportation plans

However, TriMet's efforts are not enough to keep up with demand. We need your assistance. Transportation for the elderly and disabled is fundamental to keeping people independent, in their homes, out of nursing facilities, and in the community.

Thank you for the opportunity to write in support of this critical issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Aaron Deas". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'A'.

Aaron Deas
Government Affairs Analyst