

House Education Committee  
Salem, Oregon

April 9, 2013

Dear Chair Susan Gelser,

RE: **HB 2500, referred for work**

Thank you for letting us offer support for HB 2500. We wanted to underscore some points made and questions outside the time available in our conversation.

### **Money**

This bill **does not increase the Pupil Transportation budget nor will it siphon other education budget monies for Pupil Transportation.** It provides school districts permission to use the Pupil Transportation budget in a more flexible local manner.

Pupil Transportation budgets are a "Prix fixe." The income is a total amount of the fixed price reimbursement. The amount a district receives is dependent on the number of students eligible. *A district cannot come back to the Dept of Education and say we need more money.* The state legislature sets out the reimbursement rate per pupil.

*HB 2500 is not a flexible, increasing expenditure.* This total dollar amount cannot grow unless more pupils move into the district. If there are fewer students as the year proceeds, the total dollar amount reduces. Pupil Transportation Budgets do not increase unless there is an increase in census for the designated students living in the 1.0 and 1.5 miles radii from the school for elementary and middle schools.

There is no line item to increase the reimbursement from more than the amounts specified in the OAR. Those line items are found at <http://www.ode.state.or.us/services/transportation/pdfs/oar23-0040.pdf>.

Pupil Transportation budgets can decrease. If a school district chooses to pick up a child within the two radii of 1.0 and 1.5 mile radii, then the reimbursement rate decreases per student eligible. This is infrequent but there is a history of parents demanding the school boards to pick up children within these distances if there is perceived danger and/or if there is a danger in crossing major streets. I believe in Redmond about 5 or 6 years ago this is the case: parents pressured a school to pick up their child who was a half a mile from school but required crossing Hwy 97. (From a conversation with Steve Huillet in 2005 or 2006)

HB 2500 says if the school district determines that it can dedicate any funds available or at their discretion, then they may choose other methods to assist in supporting students for safe pupil transportation. As per the example that Representative Tobias Read used, bike racks on buses... cannot be accomplished now under the present directives.

HB 2500 does not direct the district to do landscape, intersection, or street construction.



A. J. Zelada \_\_\_\_\_

We want to encourage districts to engage Pupil Transportation in a creative local manner. Ideas have been pondered and generated by Districts such as mapping safest routes to schools, purchasing gear for crossing guards, and inviting safety officers and community expertise to teach children about traffic safety. We would like more ideas to flourish. Having a choice to use a carrot for some of these ideas makes a formal, consistent likelihood of success. For example, most walking school programs depend upon a good solid volunteer whose child is at that school; once the child and parent graduate...there may be a vacuum. Being able to pay a crossing guard \$6000.00 a year may make continuity for more parents to feel secure about their child crossing Redmond, OR's 6th Ave or Hwy 97. Redmond's Pupil transportation budget for 7000 + students is \$2.4 million (+/-). Allowing this flexibility is something doable as a result of this bill.

### **Liability**

In terms of liability of the above crossing guard example, we have a state certification program that trains/tests/certifies the guard. The expectations should follow the example of requirements for bus drivers in their background/fingerprinting, calling 911, performing CPR, etc. The present Pupil Transportation assists districts to pay for these bus driver certifications. Again, *the school district could be flexible and have a guard undergo the same certification/background check as a school bus driver under the flexibility provided by HB 2500. This would not require monies from the general fund or classroom instruction funds and could create a flexible pool of both school bus drivers and crossing guards.*

### **Different from Safe Routes to Schools.**

Since the 1960s, walking and biking to school has dropped from 60 % to fewer than 10% today. Additionally, more than 30% of our Oregon children are categorized obese or overweight. As a society we need to make it possible to change these behaviors. Monies for Safe Routes to Schools flow from *the* federal government to the Dept. of Transportation for Safe Routes to Schools. The Safe Routes to Schools are often for children not picked up by school buses. HB 2500 is a complementary programs provided by the Federal money for Safe Routes to Schools. It is aimed at school districts having flexibility in supporting programs that increase active transportation opportunities in schools throughout the state.

### **Sidewalks**

This present ODOT program in combination with the other silo funding sources for sidewalks and new sidewalk construction or rehabilitation of sidewalks provide much of the ever growing need to create the landscape of safe corridors to schools. These are programs through ODOT's SWIP, Enhancement, and the new 2012 Map-21 federal budget. This is not part of HB 2500.

Again to summarize:

We recognize that some people are concerned that because districts are reimbursed after the money is spent that this would siphon off money from the general school funds, but this is false belief. As shown in reference 1, the dollars in the pupil transportation budget are completely dependent on the per student eligibility reimbursement rate. It is a fixed price budget and one cannot order off the state educational pupil transportation menu. We are simply saying, if the district can take the fixed budget and do something in a flexible manner to incorporate active transportation measures, and then this HB 2500 gives them that legislative permission to do so.



A. J. Zelada \_\_\_\_\_

Sincerely,

A. J. Zelada, OD  
Lynn Mutrie, &  
Sheila Lyons,

Zelada,  
Chair OR Bicycle & Pedestrian Advisory  
To Oregon Dept of Transportation

Mutrie,  
Mutrie Consulting

LYONS, speaking as a citizen of Corvallis  
Presently employed as Sheila Lyons, PE  
Pedestrian and Bicycle Program Manager

References:

*Details of approved expenditures for Pupil Transportation*

ref 1. <http://www.ode.state.or.us/services/transportation/pdfs/oar23-0040.pdf>

*Specific District expenditures*

ref 2. <http://www.ode.state.or.us/sfda/reports/r0047Select.asp> (this allows choice of one or all districts)

Subquery for Redmond example: 2550 - Student Transportation Services budget was \$2,494,156 for year 2010-2011

*Bus driver Requirements*

ref 3. <http://www.ode.state.or.us/policy/state/rules/pupiltrans/oar53-0550.pdf>



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