



Oregon Transit

ASSOCIATION

Public Transit Matters

April 23, 2013

Rep. Phil Barnhart
House Revenue Committee
900 Court Street
Salem, OR 97301

Dear Chair Barnhart and Members of the Committee:

My name is Allan Pollock. I am the General Manager of Salem-Keizer Transit and the President of the Oregon Transit Association, an organization comprised of public transit agencies and local governments that advocate for better public transportation services. I am writing today on behalf of the OTA to support reforming the Senior Medical Deduction and using some of the recaptured revenues to bolster funding for elderly and disabled transportation services.

The OTA has long been involved in the debate concerning the senior medical deduction; the only such state deduction in the nation. To the extent that the legislative assembly sees fit to reduce or otherwise amend the existing senior medical deduction, OTA members believe that a portion of the recaptured revenue could appropriately be used to provide a commensurate benefit to the senior community. One option would be to utilize the recaptured revenue for senior transit services.

The federal Americans with Disabilities Act requires that public transportation agencies provide complementary paratransit services for those with qualified disabilities along fixed routes. This unfunded, federal mandate is extremely expensive, costing upwards of \$30 per ride, and limits transit agencies' abilities to expand and provide better service. With Oregon's rapidly aging population, demand for elderly and disabled transit services has outpaced transit providers' ability to give rides. In fact, a recent Portland State University study predicts a 26% increase in transit rides for elderly and disabled users by 2018. The study also highlighted that even though demand has increased over the past six years, rides have decreased because no additional resources have been provided to meet increased demand coupled with greater fuel and operations costs. Without better funding for transportation services, the demand gap for paratransit services will continue growing.