



Oregon Transit

ASSOCIATION

Public Transit Matters

**Senate Committee on Business & Transportation
Comments in Support of SB 260 and SB 247
February 19, 2012**

Chair Beyer, Committee Members:

I am Allan Pollock, General Manager of Salem-Keizer Transit and President of the Oregon Transit Association (OTA).

The Oregon Transit Association is a non-profit statewide organization dedicated to improving public transportation in all Oregon communities.

OTA's membership includes local governments, transit districts, transportation districts, dial-a-rides, transit suppliers and contractors, small businesses, non-profit community agencies and transportation consultants.

I appear today to testify in support of Senate Bill 260 and Senate Bill 247, the so-called ConnectOregon and ConnectOregon Plus bills.

OTA has long supported the ConnectOregon program as a critical component of transit funding.

Oregon's transit districts are forced to piece together a piecemeal patchwork of resources to support transit services throughout the state.

Traditional sources of revenue for transit, namely a sales tax and the gas tax, are not available in Oregon making it doubly difficult for transit districts to identify revenue for transit operations.

Resources are growing increasingly scarce, particularly in light of the phase out of programs such as the Business Energy Tax Credit for transit.

These facts make the ConnectOregon program a critical component for funding transit capital projects.

Transit districts large and small utilize the ConnectOregon program for transit projects that connect Oregonians with their communities. For example:

- **City of Portland - Portland Streetcar:** ConnectOregon resources helped fund the design and construction of rail-related facilities needed to extend streetcar service into Portland's South Waterfront

- **City of Sandy - City of Sandy Transit Operations Facility:** ConnectOregon I funds contributed to the construction of a field operations facility, consolidating public works and transit operations, including a park-n-ride facility. The project provides the needed infrastructure to support the city's transit system, connecting people to and from rural and suburban east Clackamas County with the greater Portland area, and providing an alternative means of transportation to access employment areas.
- **Community Connections of Northeast Oregon - Multimodal Transit Consolidation:** Community Connections of Northeast Oregon utilized ConnectOregon funds to construct a one-stop transit hub that serves Baker, Union, and Wallowa counties. The hub allowed the agency to combine fixed route, dial-a-ride, complimentary paratransit and taxi services in one location, as well as, provided regional connection services for bicycle, pedestrian, park-n-ride, Greyhound, and regional commuter activities. As a result of the ConnectOregon investment, Community Connections of Northeast Oregon was able to preserve core services while also expand intercity bus routes; thus, providing more mobility options for area residents.
- **Salem-Keizer Transit – Keizer Transit Center:** ConnectOregon resources helped fund the design and construction of the Keizer Transit Center set to open this coming May. This transit center serves the North half of our service area and will allow for the full implementation of its service operations plan.

This is just a small sample of the critical projects that prior ConnectOregon programs funded.

The ConnectOregon Plus program would create a dedicated fund for transit operations, the top priority for the OTA.

Every transit provider in the state struggles to meet their service area's growing mobility needs.

As any of your local providers will tell you, funding for transit operations is very difficult to come by.

This is why the ConnectOregon Plus concept is so important. It starts the conversation about how Oregon will invest in its transit agencies.

OTA members support continued state investment in the ConnectOregon program and they stand at the ready to work with this committee and other stakeholders on the additional support envisioned by a ConnectOregon Plus program.

Thank you.