

**Department of Veterans' Affairs
Rural Transportation Grant**

The Subcommittee on Transportation and Economic Development recommends approval of a request by the Department of Veterans' Affairs to apply to the U.S. Department of Veterans' Affairs for a federal grant in the amount of \$300,000 for transporting veterans in highly rural areas to VA Medical Centers, and recommends that a Federal Funds expenditure limitation of \$300,000 be established in the budget reconciliation bill for consideration during the 2014 session, with the understanding that the Department of Administrative Services will unschedule the limitation until ODVA is notified that its grant application has been successful.

Highly rural areas are defined as counties with a population of seven people or less per square mile. Of the ten Oregon counties that fit this definition, the counties of Baker, Gilliam, Grant, Morrow, Sherman and Wheeler have opted to submit proposals for grant funds to better serve their veteran population by augmenting their existing transportation infrastructure. Examples of proposals include additional vehicle, maintenance and driver expenses, inter-county for dispatch and volunteer driver services, implementing web-based scheduling systems that optimize route planning, establishing a toll-free information number, outreach to the senior veteran population, mobility equipment, and over-night accommodations for drivers when necessary.

No matching funds or agency FTE are required to administer this grant. ODVA expects to be notified in April on the status of its application. The Subcommittee recommends approval of expenditure limitation in advance of an actual grant award notice so that counties can receive funds as soon as possible, without waiting until the May meeting of the Emergency Board.

The Transportation and Economic Development Subcommittee recommends approval.