



Better Eugene-Springfield Transit

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March 11, 2015

Rep. Caddy McKeown
House Transportation and Economic Development Committee
900 Court Street
Salem, OR 97304

Re: Support for House Bill 2639 relating to providing transit passes

Dear Chair McKeown:

Better Eugene-Springfield Transit (BEST) is a broad coalition of business, social service, environmental, education, faith, and neighborhood interests that “educates the public about and promotes a regional transit system that fosters prosperity, social equity, and a healthy natural environment.”

We strongly urge you to support House Bill 2639 because 1) it is a good investment in education and our community, 2) it will help young Oregonians and their families most in need of assistance, and 3) it provides immediate and long-term benefits to the environment.

First, HB 2639 is a good investment. It will save local school districts transportation costs, allowing more funding to go directly to educating our children. After a demonstration project at Hamlin Middle School in Springfield, teachers and administrators reported higher value in their everyday work because of the steps taken to have more students in class on a daily basis. And a transit pass enables students to choose to attend the school that best fits their interests and strengths, not just the school that happens to be closest, helping to prepare a strong workforce for tomorrow.

Second, HB 2639 helps those most needing help. In Springfield, one in five people are living below the poverty line. In the Bethel area of Eugene, many families struggle to make ends meet. Working families can’t always afford the time or expense to shuttle their kids to enriching after-school programs. A youth transit pass represents freedom for students (and their parents), allowing them to participate in more of the opportunities the community offers.

Finally, HB 2639 provides immediate and long-term benefits for the environment. Today having more students riding a bus to school or after-school activities rather than driving a car or being shuttled improves air quality. And getting more youth riding the bus today sets up the next generation to make transportation choices more in line with protecting our environment.

For BEST,

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