

# Oregon Transit

ASSOCIATION

## *Public Transit Matters*

March 30, 2015

The Honorable Betsy Johnson  
The Honorable David Gomberg  
Joint Ways & Means Subcommittee on Transportation & Economic Development

Dear Co-Chairs Johnson and Gomberg:

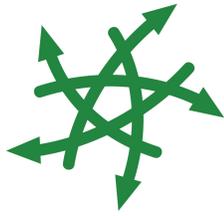
Thank you for the opportunity to express the Oregon Transit Association's support for the Special Transportation Fund (STF) portion of the Oregon Department of Transportation's budget.

The Oregon Transit Association represents public transit agencies and local governments who advocate for better public transportation services. These agencies utilize STF funds to provide elderly and disabled transportation services.

As you may be aware, the federal Americans with Disabilities Act requires that public transportation agencies provide complementary paratransit services for those with qualified disabilities along fixed transit routes. This unfunded federal mandate is extremely expensive, costing upwards of \$30 per ride, and limits a transit agency's ability to expand and provide better service.

Given Oregon's rapidly aging population, demand for elderly and disabled transit services is outpacing transit providers' ability to provide 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. Without better funding for transportation services, the demand gap for paratransit services will continue escalating.

As it stands today, Oregon's transit providers are forced to cobble together piecemeal resources to support transit services throughout the state. Traditional sources of revenue utilized by other states – primarily sales and gas tax revenues – are not available in Oregon, making it doubly difficult for transit districts to identify revenue for their operations.



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STF revenues help enable seniors to remain in their homes by connecting them to critical goods and services in their communities. For example, in Salem, Salem-Keizer Transit's curb-to-curb service, CherryLift, sees the majority of its riders traveling from their homes to medical appointments, grocery stores and senior centers. Without the mobility opportunities that CherryLift provides, many of these seniors, who are often low income and reliant on state and federal assistance, would lose their independence and be forced into more expensive long-term care facilities.

**OTA appreciates the legislature's prior support for the STF and strongly encourages the 2015 legislature to again appropriate resources to the STF for funding these critical community transit services.**

Thank you for your consideration and please do not hesitate to contact me if you have additional questions.

Kind regards,

Drew Hagedorn  
OTA Government Affairs Advocate