



March 30, 2015

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

Dear Co-Chairs Johnson and Gomberg:

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

Public transportation for seniors and people with disabilities fosters independent and productive lives for individuals who cannot drive or choose not to drive. It takes frail elders and people with disabilities to medical appointments, shopping, meal sites, physical therapy, to work and to see family and friends. A viable transit system allows aging in place, which strengthens community connections and local economies and saves the State the higher costs associated with assisted living.

As I am sure you are aware, the baby boom is beginning to retire. In the next 25 years, the Portland metro area expects the elderly population to grow more than 150%. By 2025 one out of every five Oregonians will be over age 65. Future demand for service is growing at a rate that is unsustainable.

To help contain costs, TriMet's goal is to attract older adults and people with disabilities to ride fixed-route bus and MAX. Efforts include improving bus stops where use of transit by the elderly and people with disabilities is highest; providing free travel training and individual transportation plans and donating used vehicles to non-profit organizations that transport clients. In 2010 TriMet opened an eligibility center in Northeast Portland to provide an in-person functional assessment. This has helped TriMet determine who can ride the fixed route and who requires LIFT paratransit. The RideWise travel training program is present to help applicants learn their fixed route options and enroll in Rider's Clubs and travel training.

Despite these efforts TriMet is not able to keep up with demand. Increased funding for the STF would provide vitally important funding for TriMet and its partners such as Ride Connection at a time when costs for paratransit services are skyrocketing. Without this funding, transit agencies and small providers around the state may be forced to reduce or eliminate service.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Department of Transportation's budget, and I encourage your support for increased funding for the Special Transportation Fund.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Aaron Deas".

Aaron C. Deas  
Office of Government Affairs



March 30, 2015

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

Dear Co-Chairs Johnson & Gomberg:

Thank you for the opportunity to express our support for continued state support of Amtrak operations in Oregon.

Oregon is an acknowledged national leader in the development and implementation of a comprehensive, statewide multi-modal transportation plan, which includes Amtrak passenger rail service. Over the past 20 years Oregon has shown an ongoing commitment to the importance of passenger rail through legislation that not only provides General Fund operating support, but also directed planning and expansion efforts and dedicated custom license plate fees to underwrite the cost of passenger service.

ODOT has been able to use one-time funds to continue the Cascades service, temporarily bridging the funding gap left by the elimination of the federal operations assistance program. However, those funds are now depleted and ongoing state support will be necessary to continue to operate Oregon's passenger rail program.

Demand for passenger rail service is evident in the forty-five percent growth in ridership between 2007 and 2013. Amtrak Cascades service has a positive economic impact for cities along the Oregon alignment, including Salem, Albany, Oregon City and Eugene by reducing the cost of business travel for residents and businesses and by bolstering the tourism industry. Washington's department of transportation has estimated that the positive economic impacts of the Cascade service in Oregon were \$31 million between 2013 and 2014, supporting more than 500 jobs in Oregon and generating \$1.5 million in tax revenues.

TriMet and the other transit systems along the Cascades route in Oregon have integrated their services with the Amtrak system. TriMet's light rail system includes a station specifically located to allow Amtrak riders to transfer to and from the MAX line.

Finally, the Amtrak Cascades service helps remove auto trips from the congested I-5 corridor, preserving capacity on the freeway system for high-value freight movements, reducing maintenance costs and reducing the need for expensive capacity expansions.

Amtrak is a cost-effective and important part of Oregon's vaunted integrated multi-modal transportation system. I encourage your support for continued state funding support for operation of the Cascades service.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Aaron Deas".

Aaron C. Deas  
Office of Government Affairs