

February 2, 2016

Representative Caddy McKeown, Chair
House Transportation & Economic Development Committee
900 Court St NE
Salem, OR 97301

Chair McKeown and Members of the Committee,

Ride Connection provides transportation services in Clackamas, Multnomah and Washington counties. We serve older adults and people with disabilities as well as low income job seekers, rural residents and general public. We support House Bill 4078.

We help people like Amina, who rides our Community Bus with her 3-year-old son from Banks to the Hillsboro Transit Station, where she connects with the MAX in order to get to her job in childcare in Beaverton. She says, "If it wasn't for the Community Bus, I probably wouldn't be working right now. There was no way I was going to find a job that would fit my schedule and childcare needs in Banks."

The Community Bus provides residents in Banks and North Plains with a public transit option that didn't exist before the bus's implementation in 2010. It is funded by federal 5311 funds.

We help people like Jesse who moved to Forest Grove a few years ago. Without the ability to drive herself, she was slow to get involved in her community. After seeing GroveLink featured in the local paper, she decided to give it a shot. Now an entire world has opened for her as she is comfortable traveling around her city on the only option available to her.

GroveLink is a deviated, fixed-route service that is offered at no charge to people traveling in Forest Grove. It is funded through a mix of federal and state funding.

Ride Connection uses federal 5311 funding in partnership with the WAVE, based in Tillamook, to help get people gain access to jobs and services in urban areas.

We are doing everything we can to leverage federal funding and still it isn't enough to meet growing demand. A stable source of match for federal dollars will allow us to grow in areas where the need for transportation options is growing.

We provided nearly 500,000 rides last year and yet we can't fulfill every request. We had to turn down 20% of the requests we received last year. That's nearly 2,000 people per week who didn't get a ride to their doctor appointment or to the community center to get some much needed relief from social isolation.

According to the US Census American Community Survey, nearly one-fifth of the United States' population resides in rural areas. In a study published by the Small Urban & Rural

Transit Center, "Median age and the percentage of population aged 65 or older has increased in both urban and rural areas over the past decade, but the increase has been greatest among the rural population. Approximately 16% of residents in rural areas are 65 or older, compared to 13% of those in urban areas."

As a non-profit providing regional mobility management and transportation coordination, we understand these problems all too well. Over the years we've adjusted our services to better meet the needs of all of our customers using our rural area services – to travel to and from the small urban areas that form the edge of our metropolitan area. But, the uncertainty of available matching funds has held us back from increasing transit service availability and frequency.

As our elderly population grows, and as more low-income job seekers are pushed to the edge of our region by housing costs, the need for accessible transportation options increases. Ride Connection is well-suited and poised to meet these needs, but we can't do it without reliable financial support. Please support HB 4078 as it creates a foundation for the funding support needed to continue to meet all the needs of our community.

Thank you for consideration,

Lydia Corran
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