



February 3, 2016

House Committee on Transportation and Economic Development  
Representative Caddy McKeown, Chair  
900 Court Street NE  
Salem, OR 97301

**Re: EDCO Support for HB 4078 for Rural and Small Urban Transit Funding**

Chair McKeown and Members of the Committee,

Economic Development for Central Oregon (EDCO) has, with the region, grown to be the largest private economic development organization in the state. With six offices in the tri-county area of Crook, Deschutes and Jefferson, we see first-hand the challenges of our region's workforce in commuting to jobs and education/training. Increasingly, we have a dichotomy of housing prices in our part of Oregon – home and rent prices in Bend and Sisters being more than double of the other outlying communities of Madras, Prineville and La Pine. This creates a great strain on both working families and on the region's transportation system. HB 4078 will go a long way to helping the region creatively and efficiently address public transit, both on the intra and inter-city level.

As with many issues in our region, Central Oregon leaders first look to develop their own solutions, creatively using limited resources to solve problems. Transit services are a good example of this. The Central Oregon Intergovernmental Council (COIC), the region's Council of Governments (COG) has played a leading role in developing and efficiently managing a regional transit system Cascades East Transit (CET) as well as successfully taking over and operating a struggling system in the City of Bend. Remarkably, it has done so without a dedicated source of funding but through grants, local government general fund investments and contracted service agreements. The proposed bill will stabilize transit funding and support improved transit service via the throughout Bend and Central Oregon.

Our region is both large and diverse – covering an area 100 long (N-S), 50 miles wide (E-W) and ranging from Oregon's 6<sup>th</sup> largest metro to isolated towns of less than 1,000 residents. CET provides an important link for many residents to their place of work in our region, which is driving a significant portion of overall employment growth (20% over the past decade) in Oregon. It is also a critical link for residents across the tri-county area to education, be that for GED, community college or university coursework.

Expanding public transit in Central Oregon is important to address growth and congestion issues throughout our region. Our communities and key partners are collaborating to support this regional system, but state support is a critical to push this effort to be more successful.

Thank you for your interest and willingness to hear our support of HB 4078.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Roger J. Lee".

Roger J. Lee, Director

**Economic Development  
for Central Oregon**

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