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June 6th, 2017

Senate Committee on Finance and Revenue
Senator Mark Hass, Chair
Senator Brian Boquist, Vice-Chair
900 Court Street NE, Room 354
Salem, Oregon 97301

RE: Support for HB 2745B

Chair Hass, Vice-Chair Boquist, and Members of the Committee:

I am writing today to urge you to support the bill currently before the legislature, HB 2745B, which will give voters in Central Oregon a choice on whether their areas should fund a public transit system.

I speak on behalf of over 300 16-24-year-old young people in Central Oregon. For them, a well-functioning regional public transit system is their golden ticket to accessing workforce training, education, postsecondary, and employment opportunities. Currently, our workforce development nonprofit helps 125 youth a year purchase and use bus passes on the Cascade East Transit system. This system has opened so many doors for them, and would open even more doors if it would expand its hours and routes through more local control and funding options.

HB 2745B offers a number of benefits to our Central Oregon Communities. It gives them local control -- each city can choose the appropriate level of service, funding amount, and tool for funding transit in their community. It maximizes efficiency, by retaining regional management for the transit system, minimizing costs and optimizing streamlined and convenient service. It drives economic development, helping local companies attract workers by giving employees a public transportation option that saves time and money. Some communities may choose to ask voters to support funding initiatives, and other communities may not be ready any time soon. Giving Central Oregon communities the option to seek transit funding from voters is important to our region.

We ask the Senate Finance and Revenue Committee to support the passage of HB 2745B this session. Thank you for giving local control of future transit initiatives into the hands of Central Oregon voters.

Signature,

Laura M Handy
Executive Director