



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

June 5, 2017

RE: Support for HB 2745B – Transit Funding for Central Oregon

Chair McKeown and Members of the Committee:

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

The Environmental Center believes a robust regional transit system is essential to achieving a sustainable, livable future in Central Oregon. Transit will reduce car trips and thereby reduce local air pollution and local contributions to greenhouse gas emissions. Transit will drive economic development, helping local companies attract workers by giving employees a public transportation option that saves time and money. Most importantly, transit will meet the transportation needs of those who cannot afford a car, including the elderly and low income families, who need alternatives ways to go to the doctor, to get to the grocery store to buy food, to get to and keep jobs, to get their kids to school, and to participate in recreation opportunities.

Securing funds to grow transit service in a way that is efficient and respectful of each individual community's needs remains a challenge in our rapidly growing and diverse region. A clarification to ORS190 via HB 2745B will address these challenges. HB 2745B ensures local control—each city can choose the appropriate level of service and requisite funding amount for their community. Some communities may choose to ask voters to support funding initiatives very soon to meet pressing needs; other communities may not be ready to take that step any time soon. HB 2745B also maximizes efficient use of tax dollars by retaining one regional transit system and management entity, minimizing costs and optimizing streamlined and convenient service.

In short, giving Central Oregon communities the option to seek transit funding from their voters is important to the economic development, sustainability and livability of our region. I encourage you and your fellow committee members to move HB 2745B forward and support its passage this legislative session.

Thank you for putting a new tool for local control of future transit initiatives into the hands of Central Oregon's voters.

Sincerely,

Mike Riley
Executive Director

