



June 5, 2019

The Honorable Sen. Ginny Burdick, Chair
The Honorable Sen. Herman Baertschiger, Jr., Vice-Chair
Senate Committee on Rules

RE: SB 10

Chair Burdick, Vice-Chair Baertschiger & Members of the Senate Committee on Rules:

The Oregon Transit Association (OTA) appreciates the dedication and support for transit services across Oregon shown by members of the Legislature. The people of Oregon who depend on the member agencies of the OTA are well served by your leadership and stewardship on these issues.

OTA's mission is very simple—to assist our members in the development and improvement of efficient, safe and convenient transportation services, techniques and methods, facilities and equipment. We do this through a number of programs:

- Providing assistance with professional development and management through educational programs, technical assistance and networking opportunities;
- Initiating research, investigation and information development and distribution to improve public transportation;
- Formulating & promoting legislation of common interest to providers statewide;
- Promoting effective communication between governmental bodies, agencies and providers;

OTA's members include not only public transportation providers large and small, urban and rural, from throughout the state, but also business and equipment providers that serve them, along with riders who depend on transit and advocate for it.

Over the past three months, OTA has discussed SB 10 and its potential impacts on our member agencies and we would like to take the opportunity to discuss some concerns and recommendations. With the understanding that discussions are occurring regularly on further amendments and changes to the bill, we wanted to provide our comments in writing to help in those conversations.

While the goal of the legislation is to direct cities to build with a focus on transit-oriented development, OTA fears the direct opposite will occur when the bill is fully implemented. We are concerned that transit stops (even those on main arterials and in existence since 2018) may be viewed less favorably by cities and developers as they plan out new projects. Will developers look elsewhere, along less transit-friendly areas with fewer density requirements, as they expand?

As just one example, Lane Transit District (LTD) provided the following information about potential negative impacts on its operations:

It appears that most of LTD's routes could be negatively affected if SB10 were to mandate a certain level of density adjacent to LTD's bus routes. This would include some of our most productive routes like Route 11 that serves Downtown Springfield to Thurston, and Routes 51/52 that serves Downtown Eugene to Santa Clara. These routes have mixed residential and commercial that make it possible for people to travel from their homes and employment. If SB10 required more dense housing, these routes would not be allowable.

Additionally, even some portions of our EmX (BRT) service would not meet the density criteria; however, we know that EmX and the routes mentioned above are all very high producing routes that all travel every 10 to fifteen minutes with healthy, if not exceptional loads.

In addition, we are concerned about the possible backlash of residents who live adjacent to or near transit routes. Although neutral or generally supportive of increased transit, they may become hostile after learning that the additional service will change the density maximums of their neighborhood, especially if it is a neighborhood where the bus is just passing through to get to the more dense work and residential areas the transit agency really is trying to serve.

We believe that the conversation around density needs to happen with all stakeholders around the table – the transit agencies, cities, counties, advocates and others. We believe that SB 10 can serve as an important first step in ensuring everyone around the table appreciates the need to work on solutions that lead to more and better transit-oriented development.

However, in lieu of passage during the 2019 legislative session, we would ask that lawmakers convene an interim group to accomplish this goal. OTA members are very interested in participating in such a group over the coming months.

Please let us know how we can be helpful as the bill continues to evolve. Thank you!

Sincerely,

Allan Pollock, OTA President