

**HB 2139 STAFF MEASURE SUMMARY**

**Joint Committee On Ways and Means**

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**Prepared By:** Zane Potter, Budget Analyst

**Meeting Dates:** 6/3

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**WHAT THE MEASURE DOES:**

Establishes Rural Veterans Healthcare Transportation Grant Program within Oregon Department of Veterans' Affairs (ODVA) to assist with transport of rural veterans to receive health care. Allows grants for transportation regardless of whether care being received is covered by any federal benefit plan. Deems federally recognized Indian tribes eligible to receive grants.

**ISSUES DISCUSSED:**

**EFFECT OF AMENDMENT:**

No amendment.

**BACKGROUND:**

The federal Veterans Administration (VA) provides Highly Rural Transportation Grants (HRTG) that help veterans in eligible, remote areas access transportation to and from VA health care appointments at no cost. Currently, ten counties in Oregon qualify for HRTG funds: Baker, Gilliam, Grant, Harney, Lake, Malheur, Morrow, Sherman, Wallowa, and Wheeler.

The Rural Veterans Healthcare Transportation Grant Program was created in the 2019-2021 budget for the Oregon Department of Veterans' Affairs (ODVA), to make additional funds available for one fiscal year to supplement federal HRTG funds and serve veterans in rural areas who did not meet the federal definition of "highly rural." ODVA partners with the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) to administer the program and disburse funds. Current service areas include Klamath, Deschutes, Crook, and Jefferson counties and the Warm Springs Reservation.

House Bill 2139 reestablishes the Rural Veterans Healthcare Transportation Grant Program in statute.