

To: Joint Committee on Transportation

From: Marcy Hughes, Metropolitan Family Service Project Linkage Coordinator II

RE: Allocation of State's Joint Committee on Transportation STIF for human services transportation

Dear Joint Committee on Transportation:

I am writing today to stress the importance of the Statewide Transportation Improvement Fund (STIF) allocation for human services transportation, and to request your support to ensure that Oregon invests in transportation services for older and disabled adult populations.

Metropolitan Family Service Project Linkage provides accessible, door-to-door transportation to over 1,000 older adults and people with disabilities as a Ride Connection partner. Transportation is a vital link to the community, health care, recreation, social connection, and much more. As a paratransit provider, Project Linkage prioritizes ride requests to life sustaining treatments, health, and mental health appointments, all of which are vital to our participants' wellbeing and independence. These medical rides comprise 35% of our total rides, a percentage that would be higher if our program had greater capacity to meet the huge need for accessible, door-to-door transportation. Due to limited funding for this program, we have to turn down 26% of all ride requests. The ripple effect of these ride turndowns is significant as participants may have to cancel medical appointments and delay essential care if they do not have transportation to and from their appointments.

Accessible, affordable, and reliable transportation is a critical social determinant of health and an essential resource for older adult and disabled populations. Research shows that transportation directly impacts health outcomes as it provides vital access to health and mental health care, healthy food and resources, social and recreational engagement, and faith/spiritual communities. When transportation access is limited this creates a barrier, causing vulnerable populations, including older adults and disabled people, to delay treatments & other care, or miss appointments entirely.

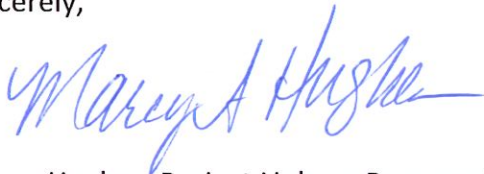
With the support of STIF funding we are able to maintain a robust volunteer driver program, but as expenses increase our capacity to support volunteers decreases. Our participants regularly share with us the critical role that human services transportation plays in their lives, not only because they get where they need to go, but also because

they have a connection with their drivers. Whether their driver is paid or a volunteer, a feeling of deep appreciation for this service is shared with us on a daily basis. More than 20% of our participants have indicated that they have no other transportation options, as they no longer drive, have a limited support network to transport them, or they don't feel safe taking public transportation.

One of our participants shared her perspective on why human services transportation is so important to her and her family, "Keep doing what you're doing, helping as many seniors as you can. It's hard for many seniors to make ends meet financially. Getting rides to places, seeing other people, going to doctor appointments; everyone needs this."

Thank you for your attention to the special transportation needs of older and disabled adults, and the need for increased funding for these growing populations in Oregon. Your service, and your focus on the Statewide Transportation Improvement Fund are greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,



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