



8/30/2024

Chairs Gorsek and McLain, and members of the committee,

My name is Jamie Stewart, and I am the stewardship specialist with Tillamook County Creamery Association (TCCA). TCCA is a 115-year-old farmer-owned, farmer-led cooperative with a cheese and whey plant in Boardman, OR. I am sending this testimony to request consideration for more options for rural public transportation between counties. We have been in communication with Kayak Public transit and The Loop; Morrow County Public transit to help employees get to work from Umatilla County to Morrow County.

Our processing facility is in Boardman and with many employees living in Hermiston, most drive almost 1,000 miles per month to work. Many of the other businesses in Boardman have similar commute patterns, with some employees traveling from as far as the Tri-Cities – a commute of 2,300 miles/month.

Two years ago, Tillamook started two programs to assist employees: a vanpool program through Enterprise rentals and an employee-led carpool program through Commute Options and Get There Oregon. We did this to help relieve employee stress, reduce commuting costs, wear and tear on their vehicles, and to help reduce our environmental impact of commuting. While it is extremely hard to change our daily habits, we are proud to that we have engaged about 40 participants in these programs. These are great programs but there are many challenges to hosting as a singular company, and I believe public transportation could fill some of the gaps to help us collectively transport more people, more efficiently.

The main challenge to carpooling is that it relies on people to self-organize many details and is therefore prone to not being a reliable, permanent solution. Individuals must agree on meeting time, location, splitting costs, and driver responsibilities. It also leads to wear and tear on personal vehicles. While the Get There Oregon platform is a good way to track rides and carpooling can be an option, there needs to be other systems in place.





TCCA's vanpooling program uses Enterprise 10-15 passenger rental vans, and our employees pay for the service and are also drivers. Some of the challenges include age limit and maintenance. The age requirement for drivers is 25+ years-old for Enterprise, but the employees that really could benefit from this program range between 18-25 that don't have their own car. Due to Enterprise requirements, maintenance is at a specific local shop in Hermiston that has limited hours of 8am-5pm, but our vanpool is not in Hermiston during those hours due to shift times. Getting even a basic oil change causes a challenge. Any larger safety or maintenance for the vehicle requires dealing with a loaner and sending to an Enterprise auto shop that are over an hour away.

Therefore, we ask that you consider how existing and new public transportation options could better meet the needs of our business, and others within the Port of Morrow.

- The Loop (Hepner-Boardman) has been working with Kayak (Hermiston-Boardman) on partnership, but it does not appear that the timing will work for our shift hours. In order to work for our employees, they would need public transportation to:
 - Arrive Boardman / Port of Morrow 4:50 am and 4:50 pm
 - Depart Boardman / Port of Morrow 5:40 pm and 5:40 am
 - These times assume a drop off location close to our facility at the Port of Morrow. However, a pickup location in Hermiston or Hepner could be a centralized location for all to meet at.
- In addition, Umatilla and Morrow counties could consider setting up their own vanpool program and fleet. Unlike typical public transportation used on an as-needed basis, you could have riders sign up for a monthly service fee to ensure your costs are covered and routes are planned efficiently. By reducing the challenges we have had with Enterprise, the transportation agencies could make sustainable commuting more widespread and more cost-effective for riders. Vanpools are especially convenient as they cater to smaller groups of people and could be arranged for people that work at the same facility or live in the same neighborhood.





Thank you for considering other options for public transportation for TCCA and other businesses at the Port of Morrow. Please contact me if you would like any more information about TCCA's experience with carpooling, vanpooling or other public transportation options.

Thank you,

Jamie Stewart
Stewardship Specialist
Tillamook County Creamery Association

