

Joint Committee on Transportation members,

Deschutes County and central Oregon have a basic framework to support safe, reliable, affordable, and equitable public transportation through the Cascades East Transit bus system, but I see issues of **frequency**, **availability**, and **usefulness** preventing it from gaining adoption as a primary transit method for residents and visitors, issues that I see an increase in funding helping to solve. My perspective comes from living in a tourism-driven town whose bus system was so good that I didn't need to own a car for the entirety of 7 years living there.

1.) Frequency: Time spent waiting at a bus stop feels like wasted time, and only lends credibility to the argument that it is an inferior mode of transit compared to cars. Currently some buses run every 30 minutes, but most are 45 minutes to 1 hour. Not only are these wait times frustrating from a convenience perspective, making connections across multiple routes that are not well aligned can make a trip just across town take hours, forcing a potential rider to choose between losing a significant portion of their day or pay for a car ride. More frequent buses alleviate this issue by reducing wait times both at bus stops and between connections.

2.) Availability: Most current buses operate on 8am to 5pm schedules or similar, which means anyone working early, working late, or working overtime cannot depend on them for their regular commute. This also means that those with traditional daytime schedules cannot use them for after-work leisure or errands. In my old town, I used to use an evening bus to go out and meet friends for drinks, then take that same bus home, which meant I never had to risk getting behind a wheel while intoxicated. Consistent availability early, late, and on weekends create a system that people can depend on and incorporate into their lives.

3.) Usefulness: While the current setup does a good job of covering neighborhoods, I see two major opportunities that would make the bus system invaluable to our community: an **airport bus**, and a **show bus**.

As a visitor flying into Redmond, the only way into town is in a car—being picked up, or getting a rental. This means that from the moment you land, regardless of the intent of your trip, you are car-bound from the very beginning, and have no incentive to explore public transit options. As a resident, the only way to get to the airport is in a car—either driving yourself, or getting a ride. With a dependable **airport bus**, not only is it a convenience for residents, it's added value for visitors, and keeps a massive amount of cars from ever entering the city. Once an airport bus is established, with some adjustments, it can also serve as a vital commuter route for residents of Redmond working in Bend (or vice versa).

Second, the amphitheater is an important destination, drawing out both residents and visitors 4-5 days each week during the summer, and whose parked cars can easily fill up every parking lot and street in a mile radius of the amphitheater. My old town had a similar outdoor venue, but had very little parking, instead utilizing a seasonal "**show bus**" that took a route through a handful of neighborhoods with stops at each major hotel, and brought concert-goers directly to the venue's entrance. In working at one of these hotels, I found that guests were constantly pleased to be able to take a bus from the airport to their hotel, then take another to the show they had come into town for.

My point in all of this is that the current system has a lot of opportunity for improvement, and if CET gains additional funding, these points I've laid out are ways that I, as a bus rider and Bend resident, feel are great ways to make public transit a useful and respectable alternative to driving, both for those who want to, and for those have no other option.

Thank you.
Erich Winchester