

Submitter: Jeff Acciaioli
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Joint Interim Committee On Transportation
Funding
Measure, Appointment or Topic: LC 2

My name is Jeffrey Acciaioli, and I serve as the Transit Operations Manager at Hood River County Transportation District, which operates as Columbia Area Transit (CAT). CAT is the public transit provider for Hood River County and connects the Columbia River Gorge region with the Portland Metropolitan area. We provide fixed route, demand response, and intercity express services. I'm writing today in strong support of Transportation Funding.

At CAT, we provide essential transportation for our growing rural communities. Our riders rely on us to reach work, medical appointments, school, grocery stores, and other critical destinations. We connect people to the airport, to regional health care centers, and to each other—often serving as the only transportation option available.

We're based in a town of just 8,000 people, yet employ 25 local staff and recently moved over 11,000 passengers in a single month—more than the entire population of our community. Rural transit is not a luxury; it's a lifeline.

CAT also plays a vital role in emergency response. We have provided evacuation support during wildfires and snowstorms, transported people during the COVID-19 pandemic, and even assisted in moving students during an active shooter incident. Our ability to respond in these emergencies depends on stable and sustainable funding.

Beyond daily operations, CAT supports tourism and highway safety. We serve heavily visited destinations such as Multnomah Falls, Dog Mountain, and Mt. Hood Meadows, reducing congestion and unsafe parking along SR 14, I-84, and Highway 35. Without transit, many visitors park on road shoulders or even stop in travel lanes, creating serious safety risks. On peak days, we fill our 40-foot buses to capacity, showing the demand is not just growing—it's already here.

Despite our successes, we are already facing rising costs and unstable funding streams. Here are just a few examples:

Vehicle Insurance: Since 2015, the cost has increased from \$1,115 per vehicle to \$2,650, averaging a 15% increase annually.

Vehicle Purchases: In 2019, CAT purchased a vehicle for \$78,828; by 2023, a similar vehicle cost \$153,585. In just four years, the price of a standard small transit vehicle

has doubled.

If the emergency bill doesn't pass, the impacts will be immediate and severe:

This winter, CAT expects a higher rate of service cancellations due to reduced plowing on I-84, OR 281, OR 35, and connecting Hood River County roads. This will affect all services—Dial-A-Ride, Upper Valley, Hood River City Route, Columbia Gorge Express, and Gorge-To-Mountain Express—as buses cannot safely operate and employees may not be able to reach work.

Within two years, CAT will be forced to reduce Mobility Management services for seniors, individuals with disabilities, and youth who need extra assistance using transit. Service cuts will likely follow, especially during early mornings and weekends.

Even sooner, additional program reductions may occur because of federal funding uncertainties and inflation. For example, a federal reimbursement request submitted in March 2025 was recently delayed with no estimated payment date—despite our understanding that those funds were already available. Such unpredictability makes local stability all the more critical.

It's an investment in safety, equity, and the resilience of rural Oregon. Our community is telling us clearly: we don't need reductions, we need expansion. Without this funding, the lifeline we provide every day is at risk.

Thank you for your time and for considering the very real needs of rural communities like ours.

Sincerely,

Jeffrey Acciaioli

Transit Operations Manager

Hood River County Transportation District / Columbia Area Transit (CAT)