



Testimony on Behalf of Jackson County Self Advocates (JCSA)

In Support of the Transit Payroll Tax Increase

Co-Chair Senator Rob Wagner

Co-Chair Representative Julie Fahey

Co-Vice Chair Senator Daniel Bonham

Co-Vice Chair Representative Christine Drazan

Members of the Committee

My name is Eric Thompson, and I am the President of Jackson County Self Advocates (JCSA). We are a group of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) in Southern Oregon who speak up for ourselves and our community. We are here in strong support of increasing the payroll tax from 0.1% to 0.2% to stabilize and restore public transit.

RVTD has already been forced to cut **60% of its services**. For many of us, this is catastrophic. Public transportation is not a luxury, it is our independence, our access to jobs, to school, to medical care, and to community life. Without it, our daily lives fall apart.

We want to share with you voices from our members and allies who rely on RVTD every day:

- **Kennethy Bodine:** “I am a fully financially independent college student and am just beginning my junior year at Southern Oregon University. I do not know how to drive, and even if I did there is no reality where I can afford all of the costs that come with owning and operating a vehicle. I live paycheck to paycheck in apartments off campus. I rely on RVTD every single day. The implementation of these cuts will severely impact how I navigate my daily life and may make some tasks impossible. I am in adamant opposition to these cuts; they show that profit is prioritized over people and WE DESERVE BETTER.”
- **Mya Shannon:** “I go to college and need the RVTD to get to school. I live in Ashland and have important medical appointments in Medford that I need to get to.”
- **Mark Davis:** “I have an I/DD resident that uses Valley Lift to get to and from work. Because of the recent cuts they will need to use a private, more expensive service to get to work.”
- **Rebecca Ryan:** “Our organization provided job coaching to three people who worked for RVTD. One of those employees worked for RVTD for 17 years. Those employees were laid off due to cuts. On top of losing their jobs, two of those employees live in Eagle Point, which lost RVTD service. When they eventually get new jobs, there will be no transportation for them to get there. This is catastrophic to our community here in Southern Oregon.”

- **Meghan Smith:** “I work in the box office at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival in Ashland and don’t own a car. Having access to buses makes Talent, Phoenix, and Medford all the more accessible. This includes things like doctor’s visits, Pride, social action events, and DMV services. Public transportation is a necessary service that strengthens our community and daily interactions. It is a resource worth investing in and protecting.”
- **Misty Bishop:** “My brother uses RVTB to get to work every morning. His employer changed his work schedule to meet the new times of the bus. He also uses the bus to go to medical appointments and visit family. My brother loves being independent and being able to do things on his own. Without Saturday service he will have to depend on others, and he has expressed sadness with this.”
- **Bryan Hadley:** “RVTB has been absolutely essential for our adult daughter that cannot drive due to medical issues. She has a full-time job and utilizes RVTB for rides for social events as well. Without this service, she would have to pay for taxi/Uber that would not be sustainable on her income. The shrinkage of service has already been devastating.”
- **Eric Thompson:** “RVTB has been very helpful to many people with disabilities. It’s made it convenient to get where we need to go. If that were taken away, it would be difficult for anyone to get to where they’re going.”
- **Cainan Nathaniel Molzer:** “RVTB is such a valuable transportation service for me and for a lot of people in my community. It is affordable, reliable, and pleasant. Thank you RVTB for getting me everywhere I need to go.”

These are just a few of the many voices in our community. Each story is different, but the message is the same: **we cannot afford to lose public transportation.**

On behalf of the 23 members who responded of Jackson County Self Advocates, we urge you to support this payroll tax increase and keep transit service stable in Southern Oregon. Without it, people with disabilities lose jobs, independence, and community life.

Thank you.

Sincerely,
Eric Thompson
President, Jackson County Self Advocates