

March 20, 2025

House Committee On Emergency Management, General Government, and Veterans
Oregon State Legislature
900 Court Street NE
Salem, OR 97301

RE: Request to Move House Bill 3556 to the House Committee on Revenue Without Recommendation

Chair Tran, Vice-Chairs Grayber and Lewis, and Members of the Committee,

On behalf of the Lewis & Clark RFPD, we urge you to move House Bill 3556 to the House Committee on Revenue without recommendation so it can receive the thorough financial and policy discussion it deserves.

Tourism draws millions of visitors to Oregon's scenic counties and cities each year, bringing economic benefits but also placing immense strain on public safety services. Fire agencies, particularly those in rural and tourism-heavy areas, face increasing demands as visitor numbers rise, requiring additional resources to respond effectively to emergencies, including wildfires, medical calls, and accidents on our highways. HB 3556 is critical for Lewis & Clark RFPD and other communities affected by tourism, ensuring that we can maintain safe and sustainable communities for both residents and visitors. Moving this bill to the House Committee on Revenue will ensure that the financial implications and necessary policy adjustments are fully examined, allowing stakeholders to engage in a meaningful discussion about how to best support tourism-impacted communities.

The rising number of visitors directly impacts fire agencies. Tourism-related incidents contribute to increased emergency calls for wildfires, structure fires, medical emergencies, water rescues, and search and rescue efforts. However, despite these growing demands, current law restricts how local governments can use new or increased Transient Lodging Tax (TLT) revenue, prioritizing tourism promotion and facilities over essential public safety services.

ORS 320.350 requires that 70% of all new local TLT rates and increases established after June 30, 2003 be dedicated to tourism promotion and tourism-related facilities, leaving only 30% available for discretionary use. This allocation does not account for the direct public safety impacts of tourism, leaving fire agencies without the necessary funding to respond to the influx of visitors and the increased fire and medical risks they bring.

The effects are tangible, and the data in Clatsop County demonstrates these impacts clearly. Between 2019 and 2024, visitors accounted for a significant portion of emergency calls, particularly during peak tourism seasons. Our emergency medical services provider for the County responded to an average of 382 calls per month, with peak months exceeding that average by more than 14%. In rural areas, volunteer-staffed fire agencies face significant

staff. In Clatsop County, this
and services, often responding
ability to allocate TLT revenue
these increasing demands.

tourism-impacted communities like
emergency response services. Ensuring
this is not only a matter of public
safe environment when they
critical to tourism as promotion

House Committee on Revenue
discussion on how to best support

challenges due to heavy workloads, insufficient funding, and limited
includes 11 fire agencies that rely on volunteers to provide year-round
to high-risk emergencies with limited resources. Without the flexibility
to essential public safety services, fire agencies struggle to meet the

HB 3556 would provide much-needed flexibility for highly tourism-impacted
Lewis & Clark RFPD to use TLT funds for critical fire and emergency
that these funds can be used to support emergency response efforts for
safety—it is essential to sustaining tourism itself. Visitors expect a
travel, and maintaining strong fire and rescue services is just as critical
and marketing.

For these reasons, we strongly urge you to move HB 3556 to the House
without recommendation, allowing for a full and informed discussion
fire agencies and the tourism-impacted communities they serve.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,



Jeff Golightly, Fire Chief
Lewis & Clark RFPD