



SUNSET EMPIRE TRANSPORTATION DISTRICT
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August 30, 2025

The Honorable Rob Wagner and Jan Fahey
Co-Chairs of Joint Special Session Committee on Transportation Funding
900 Court St NE
Salem, OR 97301

Subject: Special Session Transportation Budget – Support for Stable and Increased Transit Funding

Dear Senator Wagner, and Representative Fahey,

As the upcoming Special Sessions of the Oregon Legislature addresses the shortfall in the state transportation budget, we appreciate the opportunity to share how these decisions will critically affect our agency and the communities we serve.

The history of the Sunset Empire Transportation District (SETD) highlights the fragility of rural transit systems and their heavy reliance on state and federal funding to sustain operations. We strongly urge you to prioritize stable, predictable, and increased funding to ensure that rural communities have reliable—and, most importantly, sustainable—transportation resources. Passing the transportation package proposed in the Special Session, as well as ensuring federal funds remain available without unrelated or burdensome restrictions, is essential.

We are deeply concerned that delays in disbursements, particularly those caused by potential staffing reductions at ODOT could severely disrupt our ability to provide consistent and reliable service. Each year, SETD delivers approximately **98,000 fixed-route rides** and **11,000 paratransit rides in Clatsop County**, benefiting individuals who are disabled, older adults, veterans, families, K–12 students, Job Corps and Clatsop Community College participants, homeless and homebound residents, low-income riders, parolees, and others. Our services provide vital access to medical care, food, work, education, volunteering, and social connections. Without timely funding, we may be forced to reduce or suspend service simply because cash flow cannot meet operating costs.

These risks are compounded by anticipated delays in federal formula funding. If both state and federal funds are delayed, SETD could face a severe financial crisis before the end of the current fiscal year.

State funding represents nearly **60% of our operating budget**. Reductions would result in unavoidable service cuts, disproportionately harming disabled and transit-dependent riders. Conversely, timely and increased state funding could offset federal delays, preserve essential services, and enable the restoration of routes lost during previous cutbacks. A meaningful increase would also help us move closer to pre-COVID service levels and better serve unserved areas of our rural county.

We respectfully urge you to support measures ensuring the prompt processing and delivery of state funding and to recognize the stabilizing impact that increased investment in rural public transit will have on Oregon's most vulnerable residents.

Thank you for your time, leadership, and commitment to public transportation.

Sincerely,

David Carr

Executive Director

Sunset Empire Transportation District