

Blue Mountain Translator District

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SB 5701 Blue Mountain Translator District Critical Electrical Distribution Line Re-Construction

Co-Chair Senator Girod, Co-Chair Representative Nosse, and members of the Joint Subcommittee on Capital Construction

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony in support of SB 5701.

The Blue Mountain Translator District (BMTD) is a “not-for-profit” corporation (ORS 354.605 to 354.715). It is a “tax exempt” corporation recognized as such by the State of Oregon and the United States Internal Revenue Service. BMTD is funded on the honor system from those who use the signals. It is a member of the Special District’s Association of Oregon, and **the** delivery mechanism for Portland Broadcast Television 265 miles apart. The previous BMTD president shared that private companies and public state/federal agencies recognized its funding struggles and treated it as the less fortunate sibling. As a gesture of support for the District, these private and public partners often waiving fees or charges for leases.

THE BMTD BURIED LINE DETAILS:

The high-voltage buried power line serving the Blue Mountain Translator District (BMTD)—an essential community asset—must be replaced in 2026 to ensure its protection, preservation, and ongoing reliability. BMTD is the easement holder for the buried power line beginning on private property and then proceeds through USFS by Special Use Permit LAG201906. Installed approximately 1959, this transmission line has deteriorated significantly due to uprooted trees during windstorms and fire-related incidents, elevating safety concerns to the highest priority and necessitating full reconstruction. Several temporary splices were installed in the fall of 2025 to keep electricity flowing to the top of Mount Fanny 7,100 feet in elevation. BMTD was informed from Oregon Trail Electric Co-Op that approximately 8,300 feet needs replaced (1/2 on USFS) to depth of 24-30”, shanked in by a dozer/plow/spool at the expense of the owner, BMTD. In a December 2025 meeting with OTEC it was declared that they would not take over the line in the current condition. Hence the sense of urgency and the reason BMTD contacted Representative Levy to find funding through SB 5701 for summer 2026 reconstruction.

WHY THE IMPORTANCE:

Essential to the longevity of USFS-leased communication sites, the BMTD buried power line keeps these facilities viable and lease-worthy while delivering reliable, top-tier coverage throughout the Grande Ronde Valley—and far beyond. It powers a broad spectrum of indispensable services: BMTD's antenna television broadcasts, OSP and ODOT operations, OPB content, EONI internet, the Williams gas pipeline, emergency radio stations with first-responder Alert capabilities, Skyline Towers' critical relay for Portland microwave links from the UC Extension Service Building, and soon, potentially Union County Emergency Management Services (Nick Vora). "Beyond" captures the true regional impact: From Mount Fanny, BMTD television signals travel about 85 miles to a receive point at Black Mountain (Heppner, Oregon), where they are rebroadcast over-the-air to Umatilla residents and beyond. A prime example is Citizens TV in Milton-Freewater, Oregon, situated at the northernmost point of Umatilla County on the Oregon-Washington border—this northern reach depends directly on the robust, uninterrupted power supplied at the Mount Fanny source. Through ongoing conversations with Union and Baker County Commissioners, elected officials such as Levy, Nash, and Bentz, and the key agencies involved, BMTD has underscored the buried power line's status as a vital community asset. After nearly 69 years, it urgently requires a refresh to sustain these life-enriching and safety-critical services across multiple counties for years to come.

THE IMPACT:

The current Blue Mountain Translator District (BMTD) Board of Directors, along with partners such as Skyline Towers and the Union County Extension, have collaborated effectively to deliver improved over-the-air television service to viewers across Union, Baker, and Umatilla Counties. BMTD provides far more than just television broadcasting. The District's power line supplies electricity from Oregon Trail Electric Cooperative (OTEC) to the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) site on Mount Fanny. This infrastructure supports fee collection and enables multiple businesses and tenants—including Oregon Public Broadcasting and others—to operate reliably in the Grande Ronde Valley and surrounding areas. Now, the District urgently needs additional agencies, stakeholders, and elected officials to unite and prioritize the revitalization of this critical power line during the summer of 2026. BMTD eagerly seeks the endorsement and assistance of the Joint Subcommittee on Capital Construction to secure the required funding. With this support, the Blue Mountain Translator District will be well-positioned to upgrade and enhance power delivery to Mount Fanny, benefiting all the communities and services it sustains.

Best regards,

Tim Wallender

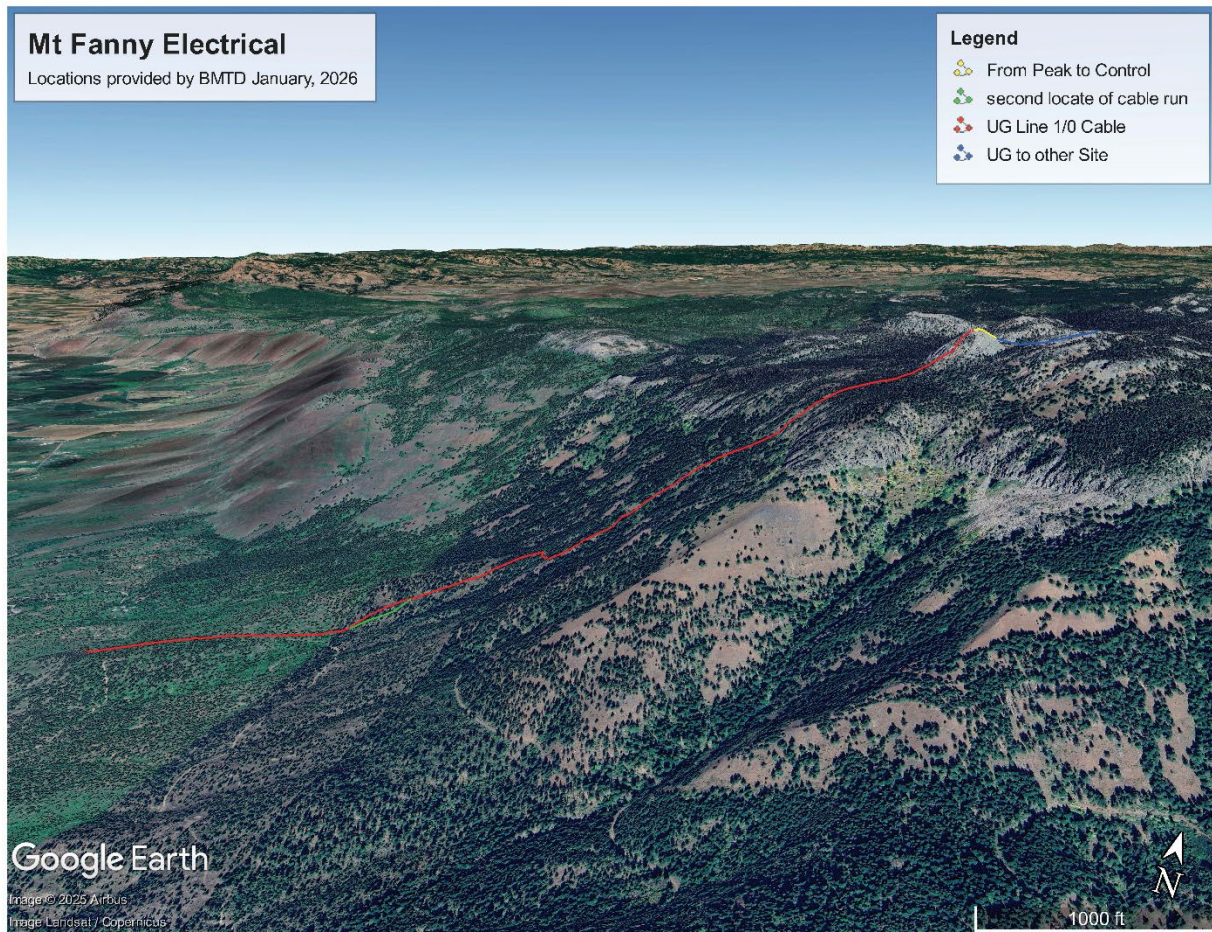
President of the Board of Directors

On behalf of the Blue Mountain Translator District

MISSION STATEMENT

In the air and on the ground, Blue Mountain Translator District is committed to delivering the best antenna television to our members.

PS: Picture on page 3 of 3



Source: Nick Vora Union County Emergency Management Service