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July 24, 2018

Attn: HB 2017 Transit Advisory Committee

RE: HB 2017 Special Transportation Infrastructure Funds (STIF)

Disability Services Advisory Council advises Multnomah County Aging, Disability, & Veterans Services Division on issues of importance to people with disabilities, veterans, and older adults. Transportation access is vitally important for maintaining independence and well-being and continues to be an issue facing our community.

Aging, Disability, & Veterans Services Division conducted extensive community outreach in summer 2016. Of the nearly 500 people staff spoke with, 89% were racial, ethnic, or cultural minorities and 68% provided responses in language other than English. When asked "what's important to you", transportation elicited the greatest amount of the responses at 26% - more than nutrition, caregiver support, abuse prevention, or any other category. People with limited English were nearly twice as likely to indicate transportation coordination and resources as important compared to people responding in English. Every group we spoke with indicated that they need more transportation resources.

A plan currently exists in our region that details the projects that will help us meet the demand for services for seniors and people with disabilities. We support further implementation of the Coordinated Transportation Plan that was updated by TriMet in 2016 with assistance from the Special Transportation Fund Advisory Committee (STFAC).

*"I'm a 75-year-old elder who suffers from debilitating migraines and other chronic health issues. On good days and short trips, I am able to take the bus near my home, but my health condition sometimes makes the short journey to the bus stop or the additional effort of a transfer an unbearable burden. As a result, I have been accessing transportation services in Portland through Impact NW via Ride Connection for the last 15 years. As a volunteer advocate, these transportation services help get me to meetings, even on my worst days, so that I can participate in community affairs in Portland. On days when my ride request is turned down due to a lack of capacity, I must stay home.*

*I support allocating funds from HB 2017 to accessible transportation services and I urge you not to allow HB 2017 funds to supplant existing funding. Please use this opportunity to make a measurable impact on one of the greatest unmet needs facing older adults and people with disabilities in this community". Steve Weiss, SE Portland*

We know that existing funding levels do not meet current demand, and with an increasingly older and more disabled population, will certainly not meet future demand. Additional funds are needed to support the demand for service, preserve existing service, and fill the gap in funding. There is a need for community transportation that enhances ADA service because while equally important, fixed route and ADA Paratransit do not meet the needs of all riders.

Thank you for your consideration,

Disability Services Advisory Council

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