



Columbia Area Transit
224 Wasco Loop
Hood River, OR
97031

Abigail Elder
City of Hood River City Council
211 2nd Street
Hood River, OR 97031

August 7, 2023

RE: Proposed Hood River Westside Urban Renewal Plan

Dear Ms. Elder and City of Hood River City Councilmembers,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the proposed Hood River Westside Urban Renewal Plan. The Hood River County Transportation District Board of Directors supports the overall intent and goals of the Hood River Westside Urban Renewal plan and looks forward to working with the City of Hood River and other partners to include transit in the implementation of projects outlined in the plan. However, the board did want to express the following concerns:

- Hood River County Transportation District (dba Columbia Area Transit) primarily depends on property tax revenues to fulfil match requirements for State and Federal grants. The district can continue to meet existing financial obligations with the redirection of a portion of the tax rates to the Urban Renewal Area as described in the graph distributed to the district. However, if additional Urban Renewal Areas were created or the district's estimated total revenue is not accurate that may impact the grants that the district is able to commit to which improve or expand services or contribute to additional mobility options available in the region in the future.
- The district appreciates the outreach and communication that the City of Hood River has done to ensure that Hood River County Transportation District was aware of and understood the impact of the proposal. However, the district is mainly funded by grants through Federal and State sources that are often applied for a year or more in advance of when funds are obligated, and service or projects are implemented. If staff had been aware of this potential change in local property tax revenue earlier staff may have adjusted some grant applications to reduce financial obligations.
- According to the transportation Motor Vehicle project priority list described in Table 5 of the Westside Urban Renewal Plan the high priority items are large infrastructure projects located on ODOT Right of Way. The district is concerned about the de-prioritization of community projects that takes steps to reduce Single Occupancy Vehicle trips by encouraging active transportation.

The board supports the City of Hood River in seeking future State and Federal assistance for large infrastructure projects and is happy to assist with advocacy and creating letters of support.

- It is acknowledged that infrastructure needs to be built before developers can build additional housing to support the needs of the community. Staff are available to work with developers and City of Hood River officials to encourage development with walking, biking, and transit as priorities. The Transit Oriented Development Toolkit was created as part of the recently adopted Hood River County Transportation District Transit Master Plan and is a great resource for developers when incorporating transit with their development.
- The board would like the City of Hood River to clarify if the infrastructure improvement work that is being done on Cascade Avenue as part of the Westside Urban Renewal Plan will refer to the MIG Cascade Avenue design refinement plan. Our riders with mobility devices and those who use bicycles look forward to ADA and bicycle friendly facilities on Cascade Avenue.

We appreciate you taking the time to consider our feedback and comments.

Sincerely,

Megan Ramey
Board of Directors – Vice-Board Chair
Hood River County Transportation District
(dba Columbia Area Transit)