

Co-Chairs Reed and Girod, and members of the Joint Committee on Ways and Means, Subcommittee on Capital Construction:

I am Becky Johnson, Vice President for OSU-Cascades, and a member of the Central Oregon Regional Solutions Advisory Committee. I'm sorry that I am unable to be there in person today, but I would like to submit testimony in support of Regional Solutions priority project funding under HB 5030. Central Oregon has two projects that were prioritized by our committee as being the most important for supporting economic development and job creation in our region. Our committee is made up of representatives from throughout Central Oregon who have spent many hours developing and prioritizing our projects. We have made great progress on some projects, and others require additional investment to come to fruition. We are requesting funds for an Innovation Center for Entrepreneurs, and a Transformational Transportation Network.

Central Oregon has long had an undiversified economy, leading to booms and busts that have devastating consequences for businesses and families. But with an influx of entrepreneurs, there is great potential for small business development and growth in Central Oregon. However, new businesses usually start with a great idea but lack capital, space, and assistance with business skills. Our proposal for an Innovation Center for Entrepreneurs would bring those elements to new businesses, and do it in conjunction with faculty and students at OSU-Cascades. The project would enable OSU-Cascades to remodel space for the Center, provide shared office equipment, conduct business education classes for participants and existing businesses, and collaborate with law students from the University of Oregon to provide legal assistance. The Center would include a lab for bioscience start-ups, bringing matching funds from the Oregon Translational Research and Development Institute (OTRADI). OSU-Cascades would also contribute funds and in-kind support for this project. The Center would collaborate with the Advantage Accelerator at OSU in Corvallis to share expertise, but most Central Oregon start-ups cannot and would not travel to the Valley for these types of services. The Innovation Center can be a catalyst to diversify the region's economy while providing incredible experience to students who work with the companies.

Central Oregon also needs improvements to its transit system, which has not been able to keep up with the rapid population growth in this region. The current system has long wait times between buses, does not operate during all the times people need it for employment and social services, and does not adequately cover the region. Our committee is proposing a Transformational Transportation Network that would not only better serve people who must rely on transit, but also entice "choice riders" to use transit and reduce congestion and costs of single occupancy vehicle travel. The project would leverage additional federal funds and would add buses, routes, improved bus stops, and park and ride lots from city to city.

These projects that the Advisory Committee developed are the highest priority for the Central Oregon region. They are critical for economic development and job creation, but also address important educational, social, and conservation goals. I respectfully ask your subcommittee to support these important projects for Central Oregon.

Sincerely,

Becky Johnson



Dr. Rebecca Johnson / Vice President for OSU-Cascades

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