



CITY OF BEND

February 9, 2016

Senate Committee on Environment & Natural Resources
Oregon State Capitol
900 Court Street NE, Room 347
Salem, OR 97301

RE: City of Bend Support for SB 1563

Dear Senator Chris Edwards and Members of the Committee,

The City of Bend is pleased to offer the following testimony in support of SB 1563. In the 1990s, the City of Bend annexed a relatively large area that was within our UGB but not within the City limits. Most of the area was served with onsite septic systems developed in the 1970s and 80s. Currently, approximately 2500 dwelling units within southeast Bend are served with on-site septic systems. Many of these units are nearing the end of their useful lifespans due to their age.

Per DEQ regulations, if a septic system fails and is within 300 feet of existing sewer lines with capacity, the homeowner is required to connect to the sewer system rather than repair the septic system. From an urban planning and public health standpoint, this regulation is a sound idea. However, the implementation of this regulation, without financial assistance from the state is challenging.

Our City Engineer routinely works with homeowners that are faced with requirement of connecting to a sewer line versus a cheaper septic repair alternative. What we have realized is that often times the most direct (and cheapest) route for connecting one home typically doesn't accommodate a more systematic approach that could serve a larger area. It isn't equitable to place that systemic approach on a single homeowner but it isn't good planning to allow the "one-off" connections if the solution doesn't complement a systemic solution.

Further, the City of Bend has experienced situations where the cost to connect a house to a nearby sewer line exceeds \$50,000. This type of cost

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is extremely difficult for a homeowner to absorb. Homeowners have been faced with foreclosing on the homes versus making the connection. It is an extreme expense and the investment isn't recouped upon sale.

In the past few years, the City of Bend and its residents have invested significantly in sewer infrastructure upgrades including a southeast interceptor and wastewater treatment facility expansion. These investments will expand our sewer infrastructure capacity so that it can serve our growing city including these areas that are experiencing failing septic systems.

The financial section of the City's recently adopted Collection System Master Plan contains provisions for collecting money beginning in 2017 with the intention to use those funds to supplement planning and construction costs for those un-served areas within our UGB. An accompanying state program providing for low interest loans to complete the construction of these projects helps meet the public health and urban planning intent of the regulation. Further, it would help cities across Oregon to engage in proper infrastructure planning for entire areas versus placing the burden of sewer connection on individual homeowners. Neighborhood health and safety will also benefit as a result of sewage being properly discharged to the publicly owned treatment works (POTW).

Of course, there are many septic systems within our UGB where sewer hook ups aren't possible and the prospect of a hook up in the near-term is low. Although our primary emphasis is on sewer hook ups we are also supportive of state support for repair and replacement in these instances within UGBS, which also helps address public health and safety and allows us to focus our local resources on improving connectivity and capacity for users within our sewer system as a whole.

Thank you for this opportunity to comment. We would be happy to provide additional detail on our experiences in implementing an often challenging state requirement albeit with very sound intentions.

Sincerely,

Paul Rheault
Public Works / Utility Director