

April 19, 2019

Senator Fred Girod, Co-Chair  
Representative Paul Holvey, Co-Chair  
Joint Committee on Ways and Means Subcommittee on Capital Construction  
Oregon State Capitol  
900 Court Street NE, Room H-178, Salem, Oregon 97301

Dear Senator Girod, Representative Holvey and Members of the Committee:

Travel Oregon's vision is a better life for all Oregonians through, strong, sustainable local economies. This includes enhancing economies throughout the state to help communities better leverage the state's \$12.3 billion tourism industry. It also means working together for community improvements that will support a safe and enjoyable visitor experience and enrich the quality of life for Oregonians. As such, we support the Mosier Joint Fire/City/Community Center project.

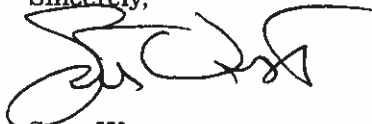
In 2016 and 2017, 3.3 million visitors stayed overnight in the Mt. Hood-Columbia Gorge region. Countless more visitors, traveled on I-84, passing by or stopping in Mosier. Popularity and publicity of the Columbia River Gorge are increasing; tourists are seeking outdoor recreation and culinary experiences in the Gorge. Mosier specifically, is home to scenic hiking and biking trails, high-quality wine and culinary experiences, and is located along the iconic Historic Columbia River Highway.

As visitors plan their day or overnight trips to the Gorge, Mosier is bound to attract a portion of visitation. It is critical to have public safety infrastructure and resource in place that can service the influx of visitors to the area. As we experienced with the 2017 Eagle Creek Fire, emergencies can occur at any moment. If they happen to occur during the height of tourism season, as the fire did, cities must be prepared to respond and ensure safety for all who are located within their boundaries.

Most importantly, an improved fire station will also mitigate potential wildfire impacts within Mosier. In 2017, Oregon experienced \$51.5 million loss in visitor spending attributable to wildfires; Wasco County alone experienced a \$2.59 million loss. Wasco County also faced horrific wildfires in 2018, with the nearby Lower Deschutes River being heavily impacted and resulting in impacts to the local outdoor recreation economy. These losses can be detrimental to the wellbeing and vitality of communities and Travel Oregon strongly prioritizes efforts to reduce wildfires and their associated negative economic impacts.

The Mosier Joint Fire/City/Community Center project will result in increased public safety and wildfire mitigation, thereby ensuring the area can remain open to visitors and strengthen the local tourism industry. Please don't hesitate to contact me if I can be of further assistance.

Sincerely,



Scott West  
Chief Strategy Officer