



## CITY OF BEND

September 12, 2024

### LOCATION

710 NW Wall Street  
Downtown Bend

### MAILING ADDRESS

PO Box 431  
Bend, OR 97709

### PHONE

(541) 388-5505  
Relay Users Dial 7-1-1

### FAX

(541) 385-6676

### WEB

[bendoregon.gov](http://bendoregon.gov)

### MAYOR

Melanie Kebler

### MAYOR PRO TEM

Megan Perkins

### CITY COUNCILORS

Anthony Broadman  
Barb Campbell  
Ariel Méndez  
Megan Norris  
Mike Riley

### CITY MANAGER

Eric King

Joint Committee on Transportation  
Oregon State Capital  
900 Court Street NE  
Salem, OR, 97301

RE: Statewide Transportation Funding and City of Bend Priorities

Co-Chairs Gorsek and McLain, Co-Vice Chairs Boquist and Boshart Davis, and Members of the Committee:

As Mayor of Bend, I want to thank the committee for traveling the state to learn more about the transportation needs and perspectives of local communities. The success of every community and every mode of transportation depends on your efforts to overhaul the state's current transportation funding formula. We will need a real, workable solution from the 2025 Legislature. We are encouraged by and grateful for your efforts to listen to local voices and to begin crafting solutions before session gets underway.

Bend is consistently one of the fastest growing communities in the country; home to over 105,000 people and slated to grow 50% larger by 2040. We are actively implementing our 2020 Transportation System Plan, as well as the state policies around housing, transportation, and infrastructure to meet population demands and align with state growth policies. We plan for and support growth – from Climate Friendly and Equitable Communities (CFEC) implementation to an urban growth boundary expansion under Senate Bill 1537 to connecting our transportation system across our city to make travel safer for all users.

Ensuring the safety of our local transportation system requires that we keep pace with growth and maintain what we have. Bend maintains more than 900 lane miles, over 500 sidewalk miles, and an expanding network of over 110 miles of separated and buffered bike lanes. Our recently adopted transportation fee will help us begin to address \$120 million gap of transportation system maintenance needs. However, more revenue will be needed to continue to connect and maintain our system, especially as Bend continues to grow and urbanize.

### Transportation priorities: Safety and operations & maintenance funding

We urge the Joint Committee on Transportation to prioritize funding for safety improvements and operations and maintenance in the 2025 session.

The Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) plays a critical role in our regional transportation system; ODOT highways connect our communities and support the region's economy. We need to improve both local and regional safety through upgrades to Highway 97. Central Oregon residents and visitors depend on the maintenance of ODOT highways to travel safely year-round. We urge the Joint Committee to fund ODOT's operations and maintenance needs as well as critical local and regional safety improvements.

We also urge the Joint Committee to prioritize funding for the following critical local and regional projects:

- Bend Parkway (Highway 97) and Highway 20 Safety. Multi-modal safety improvements at Highway 97 interchanges at Empire Avenue, Colorado Avenue, Reed Market Road and Powers Road.
- Local Multi-modal Safety. Multi-modal irrigation canal bridge improvements at NE Boyd Acres Rd north of NE Butler Market Road and Brosterhous Road and SE 3<sup>rd</sup> Street to create safer routes for all modes of travel including pedestrian and bicycles.
- Regional Safety. Ongoing support for ODOT safety improvements to Highway 97 corridor – complete highway separation/barrier and wildlife crossings from Madras to La Pine.

Locally, Bend is working hard to build a complete and connected transportation system and keep pace with housing growth. However, there are gaps in the system in areas where our transportation system intersects with other jurisdictions, notably the Bend Parkway/Highway 97 intersections and irrigation canal bridges listed above. We need funding support from the state to make these upgrades and multi-modal connections to increase safety for all users.

### **Need for sustainable transportation revenue**

Oregon must make structural changes to its transportation funding. The current system's flaws and over-reliance on the gas tax are well known. As the Joint Committee considers solutions, we urge you to implement a robust, diversified, and sustainable revenue solution and avoid dependence on one funding tool. We need funding solutions that maintain flexibility for local governments and recognize the local costs of meeting state goals for housing and infrastructure. Bend is willing to be a voice at the table to discuss these issues and work toward creative solutions.

### *Geographic equity*

Bend's relative geographical isolation means we spend a significant amount of time conveying our region's needs to state-level policymakers. The need for geographical equity is a consistent theme for us. Geographical equity requires that the state allocates dollars not just in commensurate with regional population numbers, but in accord with the specific needs and challenges of each regional population.

Another matter of equity involves the distribution of funding by state, county, and city facilities. It's important to consider not just lane miles, but the cost of constructing, maintaining, and serving those lane miles. Cities incur a variety of costs per lane mile that state and counties do not. Cities manage more intersections, turn lanes, and multimodal complexities than counties and the state do. And our need for multimodal facilities, which are increasingly required to comply with CFEC regulations, is greater than ever. We ask that you take the full needs of cities into account as you consider the distribution of funding across different jurisdictions and consider increasing the funding allocation for cities.

### **Investing locally in our transportation system**

We're doing our part, along with our taxpayers, ratepayers, and the development community, to fund improvements and maintain our transportation system through a variety of funding tools.

- In 2020, Bend voters approved a \$190 million general obligation bond to fund transportation projects.
- In 2024, the City Council adopted a new transportation fee to fund transportation operations and maintenance.
- In 2024, the City Council updated the City's methodology for transportation, sewer and water system development charges (SDCs).
- In fiscal year 2024, Bend secured over \$29 million in transportation related state and federal grants.

However, even with diversified funding sources, there are significant gaps in our ability to fund critical transportation improvements and maintenance. Bend needs help to continue to meet state goals, support housing growth, and connect, maintain, and improve the safety of our transportation system.

All Oregonians depend on, and benefit from, a complete, connected, and well-maintained transportation system. Thank you for your time and partnership in helping deliver it.

Sincerely,



Melanie Kebler  
Mayor of Bend