



September 12, 2024

Joint Transportation Committee
Co-Chair Senator Gorsek
Co-Chair Representative McLain
OSU Cascades Campus, Ray Hall
1500 SW Chandler Avenue
Bend, OR 97702

Co-Chairs Gorsek, McLain and Committee members,

On behalf of our 1,650 members and over 8,000 regional businesses, I'm pleased to provide testimony at today's Joint Transportation Committee hearing.

The Bend Chamber was founded in 1926 with the goal of creating and fostering an environment where businesses, their employees and the greater community thrive. We've adapted our work to create key initiatives that impact our community, and have recently focused on access to affordable, quality childcare and addressing Bend's workforce housing crisis.

Earlier this summer, we convened a group of regional CEOs to survey what was on their horizon – both the issues in the windshield and issues that may impact their success in ten years. One of the key issues the group identified was the need to modernize our transportation system funding methodology and plan for our region's continued growth and sustainability into the future.

Living in Central Oregon, our businesses are reliant on moving goods and services via our state highways – Highways 97, 20 and 126 are lifelines and our region's connection to the rest of the state. A commitment to and focus on maintenance and preservation of our transportation network, including routine snow removal during winter months is vital to our economy. Without reliable access to these roads our community cannot thrive.

Safety is another issue of importance, and we urge the committee to prioritize funding allocations that improve the safety of our roads, specifically Highway 97 as it intersects within our community. Relieving congestion as is being done with the north end projects will also increase the safety of our roads.

As you explore new funding sources, we urge a commitment to geographic equity and parity among other larger communities with larger projects. Consider population growth as a key factor, as the stress caused by growth (both permanent and transient) exacerbates current needs.

Businesses are not excited about the prospect of additional taxes or fees but understand the importance of dedicated and sustainable funding for transportation. As such, we urge you to consider all options

including those not tied to gasoline or diesel. User fees and flexibility with local resources should also be on the table for consideration.

Thank you for your commitment to solving this issue and we look forward to being an active participant in the dialog to represent our business community and region.

Best Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sara', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Sara Odendahl
Director of Government Affairs & Strategic Initiatives
Bend Chamber of Commerce