



September 9, 2025

Mayor Melanie Kebler
Bend City Councilors
Delivery via E-mail

Mayor Kebler and Councilors,

On behalf of the Bend Chamber's 1,712 members, thank you for the opportunity to provide comments related to your scheduled work session discussion on Transportation Funding. The Chamber is appreciative of the long-standing partnership on pressing issues for our community. With specific regard to transportation funding, we have been engaged partners in stakeholder work groups in 2023 and 2024 taking a deep dive into the TUF methodology and policy recommendations.

Continuing to address pragmatic solutions to bridging Bend's transportation funding gap is a necessity as we continue to grow as a community. Our comments below are reflective of past comments and feedback as you embark upon future transportation funding conversations.

Taxes, Fees, and Economic Climate

We would be remiss in not highlighting our ongoing concerns with the cumulative impact of taxes and fees levied on businesses in recent years. Since 2020 we have seen a dramatic increase in both state and local taxes and fees, including the Corporate Activities Tax, Payroll and Employment taxes, Business License fees, permitting fees, increased System Development Charges, the list goes on. The impact of these increases had led Oregon to rank among the least favorable states in the nation to do business in a variety of factors¹. Simply put, the cumulative impact of taxes and fees create burdens that are impacting businesses profoundly.

The compounding impacts of fees are also felt by our community at large and the ratepayers that see their monthly bills rise. In a time of economic uncertainty, any modest fee increase will undoubtedly have significant impact on members of our community.

Transportation Funding & TUF Phase 3

We understand City's revenue constraints and limited options for revenue generation. Businesses support funding street maintenance and measured progress on the Transportation System Plan (TSP). However, we urge careful consideration when planning for future phases of the TUF, as initially discussed in 2023.

- Revisit the TSP and spending associated with Phase 3 dollars. As the community tightens its belt and reprioritizes spending, so should the city. Funding for daily operations and maintenance is a must, but we advise reconsidering program expansion and new projects.

¹ Oregon Business and Industry, 2025 Oregon's Competitiveness Book,
<https://oregonbusinessindustry.com/oregons-economic-competitiveness-2025/>



- Consider other revenue sources – while options are limited, there are other avenues to pursue as initially discussed and agreed upon in Council deliberations. We urge the Council to take a pragmatic approach towards any discussions about revenue generation and engage the community in those conversations.
- Engagement with BEDAB for business perspective -- As the business advisory group to City Council, it is imperative that BEDAB is engaged in this process. Interactions with the City's Invest Bend plan and continuing to improve and elevate the economic climate must be considered in these policy conversations.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this important feedback, and happy to be part of the way forward.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sara Odendahl". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Sara Odendahl
Interim CEO
Bend Chamber of Commerce