

August 18, 2016



Dear Members of the Oregon Legislature's Joint Committee on Transportation Preservation and Modernization,

Thank you for your time, commitment and service to us all and, especially, through this effort to address transportation opportunities around the state.

(Jamie Christman, EVP Community Affairs, Bend Chamber of Commerce).

As one of the largest chambers in the state serving over 1250 members and representing 24,000 plus jobs in the region, we stand in support of the City of Bend, our members and regional partners in the goals collectively identified for our comprehensive transportation package. We believe our area has the long-range vision and commitment to put such investments to their fullest and best use in achieving those goals, including those of the state to be competing effectively in manufacturing, industry, tourism, and livability for its citizens.

Bend and Central Oregon's unique pace of growth is at a critical nexus to which transportation investment and opportunities will make significant impacts for our region as well as statewide. We believe this region is also unique for other reasons, like how its cities, counties and outlying areas all rely on each other to support the economy, manage growth, safety, mobility and livability.

The Bend Chamber, a 501(c)(6) is funded by membership dollars and receives no government funding, which allows our organization to exclusively represent and advocate for our broad spectrum of members and their employees. Investing in solutions to transportation here are crucial to the business and economic vitality.

Thus, in meetings like this evening, I say the Bend Chamber comes to the table so we can be "working for our members when our members are busy working their business". Experiences and comments have been provided by the following members who were unable to attend this evening for truly work-related reasons:

Big Foot Beverages, a highly respected distribution company with five decades of service, commitment and distribution in Central Oregon and along Highway 97, shared:

- Hwy 97 is almost always 2 lanes with very few passing lanes. This causes much traffic congestion (commercial speed is 60mph and 65mph for light vehicles). It causes impatient drivers when following commercial tractor-trailers which could lead to vehicle incidents.
- Hwy 97 needs larger truck stops as commercial vehicles are getting larger and heavier.
- There is more traffic on Oregon highways today than ever before. Proper passing lanes and highways equipped to handle all types of vehicles is necessary.

Our iconic **Deschutes Brewery**, found also in Portland and soon an East Coast brewery in Roanoke Virginia as well, wrote:

“All the points made by Rick Williams (**Central Oregon Trucking Company points provided below*) are ones that Deschutes Brewery can stand behind. We ship materials in and products out 24/7. The levels of our production are only increasing at this point. Making sure there is proper infrastructure and safety amenities available to service the trucking industry is essential.

The infrastructure in/around the Old Mill – specifically the intersections of Columbia and Bond St., as well as Bond St. and Reed Market is not properly built for heavy truck traffic. Not only is that area congested, but it’s also dangerous. The current infrastructure in that area is quite simply too narrow for trucks, and undersized for current general population traffic.

Hwy 97 – very few dedicated turning lanes (and no lane dividers) between Warm Springs and Redmond. The speed limit in this area is too fast, without having the proper lanes to pass and divert slowing vehicles. This is a safety concern, as well as an opportunity to design properly for the influx of traffic we project going forward.

During fire season, there is a huge risk of being boxed in if major roadways are closed off. What plans are in place for detours that can accommodate the variety and quantity of travelers safely?

Hwy 97 –between Warm Springs and Bend – there are no animal crossing corridors available. Increased risk of animal related accidents.

Strategy around transit opportunity between Central Oregon Cities. As population grows, more people will commute to Bend-Redmond-Madras-Prineville, etc. Create daily commuting options to help limit the number of single cars on the road... Bus, Tram, Carpool – commuting infrastructure.” ###

We held multiple conversations with our members and partners in the community about the absolute necessity to improve the US 97 Corridor similar to comments shared above, as well as, the value this will have for the state as a whole from relieving I-5 congestion to resiliency when it comes time to care for others when Cascadia or other disasters overwhelm our neighbors throughout Oregon. Our members, our workforce and our rural communities use 97 to connect for jobs, homes, services and more.

This also means commuting in and out of Bend’s north end has significant impacts on our region. The Cooley/97 and Empire Avenue areas are congested beyond what is safe or acceptable for the rate of growth and tourism placed upon Bend and this region. Solutions have been identified. Now, they need proper funding to meet our goals here.

In closing, the most important question I have for you tonight is this: will we still get funding if for any reason our three state representatives end up not voting in favor of a transportation bill?

With gratitude and respect,

Jamie Christman, EVP Community Affairs, Bend Chamber of Commerce

*Below you will find a list of issues that directly impact transportation operations here in Oregon provided by [Rick Williams of Central Oregon Trucking Company](#):

First and foremost our priority is the safety of the motoring public, our drivers and our equipment. Our safety record is exemplary as reported by the FMCSA through both the Safer Stat and the SMS data base systems.

As many of you know we have become a highly regulated industry. In particular to Hours of Service, there has been great debate on what provides a driver with an adequate amount of rest in an effort to maintain safety behind the wheel and reduce fatigue. Our number one issue is where do our drivers actually perform hours of respite? I think it would be fair to say that the infrastructure for our industry was not prepared for the legislative changes made to reduce driver fatigue. Below you will find some of the issues we face daily just with this single issue:

1. Truck Stops have become plugged
2. Drivers are being harassed for parking alongside highways in wide spots, on-ramps etc. and asked to move on.
3. Private property owners are beginning to restrict or limit truck parking, locations such as Wal-Mart or shopping malls
4. Shippers do not have the property space nor facilities to accommodate overnight parking for drivers
5. Our drivers do not have safe or secure places to rest adequately
6. Rest Areas are busy and full and they simply do not have the capacity needed, but even if they did the constant in and out of traffic doesn't allow for peaceful rest
7. People tend to forget that drivers need amenities, not just a place to park or sleep. How many of you would park where there is no food available, water available, showers or even a restroom?

So what ripple effects does some of this cause?

1. Trash along roadways
2. Feces along roadways
3. Containers with urine

Just to name a few.

As you can see this single issue is a major problem!

Some other issues we encounter in the course of our business that should be considered:

1. Speed variations and closing speeds

- Our trucks are governed at a maximum of 62 MPH, this is for safety, yet the general public travels much faster even in 55 mph posted areas. Closing speeds cause accidents especially where there are limited passing lanes or on all single lane roadways.
- Not enough passing lanes or two lanes in many areas of Oregon Highways (97 in particular) But Highway 20, 26 and other Eastern Oregon and Southeastern Oregon highways have the same issues.
- Not enough rest areas with basic amenities
- Weight Mile tax is some of the highest taxes in the country for trucking
- Congestion in even smaller cities such as Bend deplete drivers Hours of Service with little productivity.
- Poorly maintained shoulders of road cause many issues, poor visibility of wildlife, increased hazard on narrow roadways that can cause trucks to rollover.
- Poorly maintained or repaired roadways that cause additional maintenance costs to the transportation provider.

In summary, when you look at just the few issues I have listed, which could be drilled down to much deeper depths that would provide a better understanding on the impact to Oregon citizens, employers, tourists etc., you may think these problems are problems the transportation industry should bear the brunt of. But the reality is simple, transportation companies are private companies, free enterprises and they work for a profit, if our government cannot solve some of these issues, the people of the State of Oregon is who will bear the cost and burden of all of this through passed through cost increases. Everything you own or eat came by truck in some form or fashion. Everything you dispose of or recycle goes by truck in some form or fashion. This is a State of Oregon issue and our legislatures should find cost effective resolutions, spend the people's money with the greatest amount of care as possible, in order to resolve them or they simply are not doing the job they are tasked to do. That means the very most cost effective way, not prevailing wage only providers, who is the State to mandate the people spend their hard earned dollars at Union wage levels. Not a single one of us would do that with our household finances!!

Thank you,

Rick

Rick Williams

Chief Executive Officer

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