



April 8, 2021

Congressman Cliff Bentz  
Delivery via email

Honorable Congressman Bentz,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit a letter of support for the City of Bend's request for federal funding to construct the Midtown bicycle and pedestrian crossings. On behalf of the Bend Chamber's 1,500 business members, the organization whole heartily supports efforts to integrate the East and West transportation corridors of our city, and support multi-modal transportation. As you know from recent conversations with Bend Chamber leadership, we are working with both public and private entities to spur economic development within the Central Area and this project is a key component.

As you are aware, downtown Bend and the Central Area are separated by US97 and the BNSF railway. The lack of quality, safe multi-modal connectivity between these areas has hindered development and redevelopment in the Central Area. The Midtown Bicycle and Pedestrian Crossings Project is a critical component of the City's plans and will provide the needed connectivity between these two areas. It will also serve as a catalyst to spur further private and public investment in the area, and has a key component of our initial discussions with private investors.

Planning for the Central Area was initiated over 15 years ago. The Central Area covers 667 acres in the heart of the city. The area offers proximity to downtown, the Deschutes River, Mirror Pond, parks, and a variety of regional destinations; a walkable street grid; neighborhoods with historic character; successful small neighborhood centers and corridors; access to a high concentration of jobs by a variety of modes; and public transit service.

In 2020 the City authorized an implementation plan and an urban renewal plan for the area that includes tax increment financing (TIF) as a funding mechanism to support strategic investments in the area. The Chamber fully supports the TIF approach and believes it is a thoughtful and strategic route to developing the Central Area. We have begun the process of identifying and convening private investors with interests in the projects, including transportation and infrastructure, affordable housing assistance, public facilities and open spaces, and development assistance.

We are keenly aware that competition for transportation funding is strong. The residents of Bend have demonstrated their commitment to building a robust and diverse transportation system, and we support the City's request for federal funding to complete this important project.

Thank you for your consideration of this project funding request.

Best regards,

Creating an environment where businesses, their employees and our community excel together through collaboration, advocacy, resources and leadership to meet Bend's business challenges.



Katy Brooks  
President + CEO  
Bend Chamber of Commerce

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