



Law Office of Mike Reeder
Oregon Land Use Law

November 13, 2019

Mayor Russell, City Council and CTAC Members
c/o Karen Swirsky, Senior Planner
710 NW Wall Street
Bend, Oregon 97701

Re: City of Bend responsibility for transit planning and facilities

Honorable Mayor Russell, City Council Members and CTAC Members:

I represent Bend Towne Center, LP. Attached to this letter is a memorandum from my client's transportation engineering consultant, Joe Bessman, PE of Transight Consulting, LLC. Mr. Bessman's memorandum highlights the specific problems associated with the location and operations of the current Hawthorne Station as a primary transit hub for Bend and Central Oregon.

I write to introduce this memorandum to you. This memorandum illustrates the need for the City of Bend to work more closely with Cascades East Transit/Central Oregon Intergovernmental Council to create an efficient and equitable transportation system that thoroughly integrates transit planning—and necessary transit facilities—into the overall City of Bend Transportation System Plan, which you are currently updating.

A successful transit system reduces traffic congestion. It provides essential transportation services to members of our community who cannot drive, bike or walk at distance. It supports intended land-use patterns, climate change initiatives, economic development, higher education and can reduce the impacts of Bend visitors. A thoughtfully planned and well-designed transit system is an essential component of the City of Bend Transportation System Plan.

But so far, transit has received little attention from the TSP Steering Committee or its advisory bodies, including the Citywide Transportation Advisory Committee or the Funding Work Group. Similarly, during its summer and fall meetings, the CET Bend Transit Master Planning Advisory Committee devoted less than 10 hours to discuss, analyze and develop plans for Bend's transit system. As a result of this limited planning effort, the current proposal for a \$250-\$300 million transportation bond measure to be placed on the ballot in May 2020 contemplates allocating less than 3 percent to transit needs.

For the reasons discussed in the attached memorandum, the current transit system is in desperate need of significant capital investment. Hawthorne Station cannot be the hub of a modern and efficient transit system. It appears to be a sort of “accidental” transit station that never had the attributes necessary to support a successful transit system. In his memorandum on pages 4-7, Mr. Bessman outlines the historic development of the Hawthorne Station. The take-away from his research and analysis is that the use of the Hawthorne Station site has morphed over time—an evolution of encroachments on public streets without proper community engagement, analysis or planning. The use of the Hawthorne Station site as a transit hub was a bad idea from the start, and the more Bend and the region has grown, the worse the consequences have become.

Now is the time to plan and implement a new transit system that will work for the entire community, one that complements the rest of your vision for the Transportation System Plan and allows all Bend residents to finally reap the benefits a thriving transit operation.

Specifically, my client respectfully requests that the City:

1. Adopt policies and implementation strategies into the Transportation System Plan that promote the development of a modern and efficient transit system that moves the transit center (“hub”) from Hawthorne Station to a more appropriate location in or near downtown.
2. Adopt policies and implementation strategies into the CET Master Plan that outlines a comprehensive plan for determining siting, design and funding for a transit center with full public outreach and engagement.
3. Seek to obtain the necessary funding (including via the bond measure) for the planning, siting and construction of a new transit center in or close to downtown and mobility hubs located strategically throughout the City.

These requests are consistent with the current Bend Urban Area Transportation System Plan, which calls for a transit center in downtown. State land use planning goals further require the City to engage the public in all phases of the planning process (Goal 1), to establish a policy framework and adequate factual base for all decisions and actions (Goal 2), and to a safe, convenient and economic transportation system, including mass transit (Goal 12). Bend finds itself at a crossroads regarding transit planning and implementation. The City can continue to delegate the planning for this essential component of its transportation system to CET, an operationally-focused organization with little access to planning or capital resources, or it can muster its substantial forces to implement transit strategies that will pay dividends economically, socially and environmentally for all Bend residents.

Respectfully,

Micheal M. Reeder