

# **City of Bend Accessibility Advisory Committee (COBAAC) 2022 – 2023 Strategic Plan**

## **Purpose**

The City of Bend Accessibility Advisory Committee (COBAAC) was established in 2010 to provide advice and feedback regarding the City’s efforts to be an accessible and welcoming community with a focus on meeting the letter and intent of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). In 2022, the City Manager accepted recommendations from COBAAC members that the Committee charter should focus on elevating accessibility as equity while continuing to ensure COBAAC is involved in the City’s ADA compliance efforts. This inaugural COBAAC Strategic Plan further elevates the important role that accessibility will play in COBAAC’s work of supporting the City’s efforts to be a more accessible, welcoming, and equitable community.

## **Objectives**

The 2022 – 2023 City of Bend Accessibility Advisory Committee (COBAAC) Strategic Plan (“Plan”) has several objectives:

- Guide the work of COBAAC
- Serve as a tool to receive information, feedback, and support from City staff; and
- Serve as a tool to receive feedback and endorsement from City Council; and
- Infuse accessibility in the Council’s annual goal-setting process.

## **Background**

This is the first Plan developed by COBAAC. To ensure sufficient time and resources are available for Committee members and City staff to successfully engage in the inaugural Plan implementation and evaluation process, the scope of the 2022 – 2023 Plan is intentionally limited. In some cases, the first year of a project may be developing a project, the second year on implementation, and the third year on measuring outcomes. The first year may also be spent identifying opportunities that are capitalized in later years or integrating the work of COBAAC in existing events and creating stand-alone events in subsequent years, using lessons learned to grow and improve.

## **Plan Development Process**

During the summer of 2022, several brainstorming sessions were held with COBAAC members. Several ideas for areas of focus, which were later grouped based on content similarity, emerged. These ideas can be found in Appendix A. COBAAC members then identified one activity within each of the areas of focus on which to focus their work. This activity was then further operationalized, including the development of specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound (SMART) goals. These activities and goals are discussed in detail in the remainder of this Plan.

## **Improving Transportation and Infrastructure**

COBAAC members will partner with the Bend Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) to provide feedback about how the MPO should use American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds. To improve transportation accessibility, COBAAC members will advocate for the use of ARPA funds to incentivize local, on-demand transportation providers to include more accessible vehicles in their fleets.

Developing a partnership with the MPO will include having members of the MPO present to COBAAC so COBAAC members can learn more about the MPO's work, including current strategies and goals, and engage in a preliminary conversation with the MPO about the process to allocate available ARPA funds. Additional meetings with the MPO will be scheduled as needed for COBAAC to understand, advocate for, and provide feedback on plans to use ARPA funds. These meetings and discussions may culminate in a formal letter to the MPO and City Manager outlining COBAAC's recommendations. To support an ongoing partnership between COBAAC and the MPO, a member of the MPO will be invited to regularly attend COBAAC meetings.

To support their ARPA fund advocacy, COBAAC will invite representatives from local transportation providers to learn more about their efforts to provide accessible, ADA compliant transportation services and accessible connectivity within the city. This information will be used to create the specific recommendations that will be provided to the MPO. These discussions may also be used to encourage local transportation providers to expand fleet accessibility beyond any incentives or improvements which might be available if ARPA funding is provided to support the expansion of accessible transportation in Bend.

## **Creating an Accessible Community**

Ensuring the voices of people experiencing disabilities are represented in local government is among the reasons COBAAC was created by the City of Bend. To this end, COBAAC plans to identify opportunities to educate and inform the Bend community about the experiences of people with disabilities. Although COBAAC will develop specific, measurable goals for this priority area at a later date, some preliminary ideas include creating a "what to do" toolkit to help community members identify resources for resolving accessibility and ADA compliance concerns and creating a resources page on the City of Bend Accessibility Program website which could also provide "what to do" information along with links to external accessibility resources, as well as City of Bend resources such as COBAAC, the Human Rights and Equity Commission, and key City staff.

Supporting local business accessibility efforts is also related to community education and is important to supporting the City's permitting, building, and general accessibility requirements for local businesses. COBAAC members are interested in partnering with the Bend Chamber of Commerce to create and share information with Bend businesses regarding accessibility on topics such as accessible rights-of-way, parking, and paths of travel, as well as interior accessibility opportunities. COBAAC members are interested in meeting with and learning from relevant stakeholders, including, but not limited to, the Bend Chamber of Commerce, representatives from the Downtown Business District, and staff from Visit Bend, to learn more about needs and opportunities before establishing specific, measurable goals for this priority area.

### **Creating a Culture of Accessibility Within the City of Bend Organization**

COBAAC will work with the City of Bend to advocate for City to receive about disability, equity, accessibility, and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). The development of specific, measurable goals for this item will take place after COBAAC members learn more about the related trainings employees currently receive from the City or are required to complete based on their profession. This information gathering could take the form of a discussion between COBAAC members and City staff from each department. After gathering information about current training, the COBAAC membership will consider what, if any, additional training is needed and how to proceed with developing and elevating recommendations to the City Manager, including key milestones, metrics of success, and anticipated timeline for the implementation of recommendations.

## **Appendix A:**

### **Brainstorming Ideas**

- **Creating a Culture of Accessibility within the City of Bend Organization**
  - COBAAC involvement in the overall budget development around transportation.
  - Have someone involved in the Affordable Housing Advisory Committee.
  - Ask the City to provide training to engineers, planners, inspectors, and developers about disability equity, ADA, and making things accessible. This could include having project managers invite COBAAC members to site visits or the planning stages of projects.
- **Creating an Accessible Community**
  - Proactively letting the community know more about COBAAC and the resources available to them.
  - Print business cards with basic information/numbers to find accessible needs or report ADA parking issues, and barriers/ right-of-way sidewalks/bird bikes/ snow removal. Have a list of areas that COBAAC is involved/actively advocating. Leaving cards on windshields – COBAAC is here for the community. Set a COBAAC table out at events held around the City of Bend.
  - Print a “Did you know?” card with information when people are parked illegally or give it out to the people within the disability community to put on cars.
  - Be a resource for people to learn more about how they can make infrastructure more accessible. Consider providing education to different stakeholders.
  - Create a partnership with the Chamber to provide education for businesses about accessibility in the right-of-way, parking, and path of travel, as well as the requirements for accessible setup inside a store, including in restrooms. This could include having an education card to leave as a resource.
  - Have a COBAAC booth at events to show who and what COBAAC is all about.
  - Look into collaborations with Bend Park & Recreation and Oregon Adaptive Sports to help expand a more robust inclusive selection of fitness class offerings.
  - Be involved in and ensure inclusivity of the outdoor competitions and events in town, including concerts, making sure they are accessible.
  - Network with other Central Oregon disability advocacy groups
  - Identify opportunities to create more awareness about people experiencing disabilities, including events specifically about the disability community.
- **Improving Transportation and Infrastructure:**
  - Learn more about the requirements for accessible on-demand transportation.
  - Work to incentivize local transportation providers to make more accessible vehicles available.
  - Learn more about accessible bus stops, paths of travel, and seating for people with mobility-related disabilities.
  - Advocate for a bridge across the Deschutes at Good Dog (and other projects) to be accessible. This could include providing recommendations and feedback.
  - Learn more about requirements for a post-occupancy accessibility inspection and enforcement for the path of travel and access issues.
  - Partner with Bend Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) to provide feedback on the use of American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds
- **Other Areas of Influence:**
  - Advocate for education about Bird Bike compliance and accessibility.