

Transportation Fee Roundtable #2

Meeting Minutes

September 13, 2023

Meeting called to order at 9:35am on Wednesday, September 13, 2023 at City of Bend Municipal Court at 555 NE 15th Street and online. Present were Mayor Melanie Kebler, Mayor Pro Tem Megan Perkins, Councilor Anthony Broadman, Councilor Ariel Mendez, Councilor Megan Norris, and Councilor Mike Riley.

1. Welcome and Introductions

- Mayor Melanie Kebler reviewed the purpose of the roundtables and ground rules for participation. She recapped feedback from the August roundtable.

2. Mid-Size Cities Financial Comparison

- Finance Director Samantha Nelson provided information on taxes and fees assessed by other midsize cities in Oregon in comparison to Bend. She reviewed total tax rates, population and assessed value growth, city square mile and centerline miles for Bend, Redmond, Beaverton, Gresham, Hillsboro, Medford, Eugene, and Salem. She discussed how Measures 5 and 50 create a need for cities to develop alternative funding to meet demands for City services.
- Mayor Melanie Kebler asked roundtable participants if they had any questions.
 - A few participants asked clarifying questions on lane miles, what is included in the total tax rate, and differences between taxes and fees.

3. Uses of Transportation Fee Funds & Discussion

- Chief Operations Officer Russ Grayson and Director of the Transportation and Mobility Department David Abbas provided detailed information on how Transportation Fee funds would be deployed. Russ Grayson reviewed the community values roundtable participants weighed in on during the August roundtable, example budget priorities for the funds, and how those priorities and values relate. David Abbas presented specific recent projects that have been completed by the City, reviewed current pavement conditions and the cost effectiveness of timely preventative maintenance, and summarized what the City was able to accomplish during a high-budget versus low-budget year. He also talked about how the City approaches project prioritization and how sustainable funding would support a more data-driven approach to prioritization. David Abbas presented example additional staffing needed that would be supported by Transportation Fee revenue and how that would increase capacity for improving concrete, sidewalks, sweeping, plowing, striping and street markings, and engineering and programmatic support.
- Mayor Melanie Kebler asked roundtable participants for their questions and reactions.
 - Feedback included: the information presented was valuable in understanding how the funding would be deployed, including for staffing; interest in higher safety standards for bike lanes; concerns about burden to lower-income households; how COVID-related funding has dried up, so sustainable funding sources even more important; whether there are ways to reduce the cost of deferred maintenance and if portions of inventory have an outsize burden on maintenance; comments on whether City standards are excessive meaning there is more associated cost for maintenance; how small improvements can have a big impact on sense of safety; desire for factoring in equity into prioritization factors.

4. Break

5. Key Questions / Messages

- Mayor Melanie Kebler reviewed the top five questions the City has been hearing so far regarding the Transportation Fee, as well as key messages that address those questions. She asked the group for their reactions and input.
 - Feedback included: humanizing the benefit that residents and businesses can expect to receive; making sure to be clear on what these funds support and what they do not support; thinking about how to keep people outside of their vehicles during the winter; the role of public transit in enhancing transportation options.

6. Utility Billing Assistance Program Overview

- Business Manager Dana Wilson provided information on the current utility billing assistance program and how/why the program is being modernized.
- Mayor Melanie Kebler asked roundtable participants if they had any questions.
 - Feedback included that it would be helpful to see the actual amount people would pay under the new program; if there are difficulties in accessing households that could qualify for assistance; that barriers exist in accessing resources by those that need these resources, especially when the funding source is federal.

7. Nonresidential Transportation Fee Engagement Plan & Discussion

- Senior Management Analyst Sarah Hutson summarized how other cities in Oregon approach structuring their nonresidential Transportation Fees, with a range of complexity and equity. Economic Development Manager Ben Hemson reviewed the business community engagement plan that will be supported by the Bend Economic Development Advisory Board (BEDAB) to scope options for assessment, conduct focus groups with industry stakeholders, and develop policy input for Council starting in October.
- Mayor Melanie Kebler summarized the various considerations that will be brought into those discussions and asked roundtable participants for their reactions and suggestions.
 - Feedback included: consideration that different businesses generate different level of revenue and have different margins; question on what share of the revenue will be generated by businesses; ways to consider more impactful users based on vehicle weight or studded tires; question on what share of businesses don't pay property taxes; whether government entities can be categorized differently because of public benefit; how fees could impact the services of nonprofit organizations and whether nonprofits can be categorized differently because they support underserved audiences; question on how the City will charge businesses with more than one physical location; question on how small, remote, and home-based businesses will be treated; the impact of short-term rentals; interest in seeing the structure of the Transportation Fee dovetailing with the SDC methodology update; consideration that even businesses with physical locations may be allowing hybrid work and may have less impact as a result; how a flat fee would not be an ideal structure and also how too many different categories would not be ideal; if there are ways to account for visitors in the categories that get developed.

8. Where to Find Information

- Senior Management Analyst Sarah Hutson mentioned to the group that there is a Transportation Fee webpage on the City website that is being kept up-to-date with information and frequently asked questions.

9. Wrap Up

- Senior Management Analyst Sarah Hutson reminded participants about the next and last calendared roundtable taking place on October 11th.

Meeting adjourned at 11:56am.

Attendees:

Bend Bikes	Elisa Cheng
Bend Chamber of Commerce	Sara Odendahl
Bend Economic Development Advisory Board (BEDAB)	Kevin Perkey
Bend La Pine School District	Kim Crabtree
Bend Park & Recreation District (BPRD)	Kristin Donald
CET/COIC	Eric Lint
City Transportation Advisory Committee (CTAC)	Richard Ross
Commute Options	Whitney Bennett
Council on Aging	Cassie Regimbal
Environment and Climate Committee (ECC)	Mark Buckley
Human Rights and Equity Commission (HREC)	Joanne Mina
Latino Community Association (LCA)	Leslie Cano
Old Farm Neighborhood Association	James Dorofi
Transportation Bond Oversight Committee (TBOC)	Gina Franzosa
Transportation Bond Oversight Committee (TBOC)	Will Green
Bend City Council	Melanie Kebler
Bend City Council	Megan Perkins
Bend City Council	Anthony Broadman
Bend City Council	Ariel Mendez
Bend City Council	Megan Norris
Bend City Council	Mike Riley
City of Bend	Ben Hemson
City of Bend	Dana Wilson
City of Bend	David Abbas
City of Bend	Elizabeth Oshel
City of Bend	Eric King
City of Bend	Russ Grayson
City of Bend	Samantha Nelson
City of Bend	Sarah Hutson
City of Bend	Sharon Wojda