

CITY OF BEND
TRANSPORTATION ISSUES
A CITIZEN'S OBSERVATIONS
January 4, 2019

The City of Bend is no longer a backwoods town. People from all over the country are moving here. The population is exploding along with the demands on our transportation systems – more cars, more trucks, more congestion, more strain on the infrastructure. Growth is far ahead of solutions. I offer some observations and suggestions.

1. Government Support: As new residents flow into the city from across the country, it is imperative that State and Federal agencies provide financial and material support to Bend. It is not a question of “requesting” support, it must be demanded. Our transportation infrastructure must be improved, not just to support our citizens and visitors, but the critical preparation for rescue and recovery operations following any number of potential major natural disasters.

2. Central Oregon's Hub: There are only two major highway arteries in Central Oregon – Highway 97 running north and south, and Highway 20 running east and west. These arteries cross in Bend, sort of. Both of these highways need to be enhanced for larger traffic flows throughout their length, border to border. And there needs to be an efficient intersection of the two somewhere in or near Bend.

Large trucks (and cars) entering from the east, must deal with heavy traffic to reach the intersection of 3rd Street and Greenwood, then negotiate the tight turn north on to 97. If pedestrians are crossing 97, they will halt all turning vehicles. There must be a better way to move traffic through or around town. The connection of Empire and 27th Street will provide a by-pass, but it will not be much better because it is not designed with heavy trucks in mind, and the increased traffic will be unwelcomed in the residential areas.

The Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) has been working on a plan to improve the junction of 3rd, 97, Empire, the Parkway, and Highway 20 at the north end of town for years. That area is reaching

critical mass. The city, the state and the feds need to get moving on that project now!

3. Bend: Where to begin? Because of the haphazard way the town/city grew, Bend has a dysfunctional web of streets. Commercial and industrial areas are scattered here and there. Residential neighborhoods are isolated by the railroad, canals and the Parkway. Connectivity is the problem.

a. Street Connectivity: There are too few full-length north/south, and east/west arteries. The Parkway (which is a separate issue) and 3rd St are overwhelmed. Boyd Acres stops at Butler market, as does 8th. As an aside; I must make eight turns to get to my doctor's office, eight! And that is just in the NE quadrant. The Boyd Acres Neighborhood is isolated between the railroad, Empire, Purcell and Cooley. In an emergency, there will be absolute gridlock trying to exit this neighborhood. We need another access point to 97 over the tracks at Robal or Nels Anderson. The growing commercial area between the tracks and 97 is going to be another headache with very limited access and egress. We need more vehicle access to open that area up. Yeoman Rd is one of those streets that just ends. It should be extended west over the canal (barrier) to connect with 18th. Obviously, Empire needs to be connected to 27th as quickly as possible. And it should be four lanes with LARGE roundabouts for the heavy traffic. Portland needs to connect directly with 14th. There are several major arteries that actually go nowhere. But drivers have to use them because that's all we have. I'm referring to Revere, Studio, Purcell, 8th, 14th, 15th, Empire, Yeoman, Division, Reed Market and many others. These streets come to an abrupt end, often due to the railroad or canals. Let's overcome these obstacles and connect these streets in an efficient traffic pattern.

b. Street Names: Why is one street named Neff, Penn, Olney, and Portland? Another is 20 (no name here), Greenwood, Newport. Purcell is fractured between Butler Market and 20 (at Costco). Someone thinking they can drive from Costco to Pine Nursery on Purcell will be in for a rude surprise. It happened to me. A taxi driver got lost there and the meter was running. Connect Purcell or rename its various sections. Consolidate some of these other street names.

c. Shopping Centers: I shouldn't have to explain how difficult it is to enter and exit the Forum and Cascades Village shopping centers.

d. Public Transit: Not enough bus routes to be effective.

e. Bicycles: Bicycling in Bend is a life-threatening pursuit. Our streets are too congested for safe bicycling. The solution would be to create separate bicycle/pedestrian trails and corridors. I gave up biking, too dangerous. Work together with Parks & Rec to expand our trail system dramatically.

f. Electric Vehicles: Electric vehicles are the future and the future is here and now. The city should be providing (or supporting) numerous vehicle charging stations.

g. The Deschutes River: The river comes into play because of the need to cross it. We could use a couple more bridges for vehicles and pedestrians. A vehicle bridge is needed between Brookwood and Cascade Lake Highway to provide access at the southern end of town. More pedestrian bridges should be available in town.

The city should treat the river as the primary asset that it is. There should be a Master Plan for protecting and using the river for the benefit of all residents and visitors. The hydro-electric plant should be removed. It's out of date and out of place. It ruins that section of the river. As for mirror pond, tax payers should not have to pay millions of dollars to repeatedly dredge the silt. It is not worth it. Remove the dam, let the river flow. Create natural pond-like catchments. Also look at the canal connectors. At some point they should go or be upgraded in such a way as not to detract from the river's beauty or recreational benefits.

h. Parking: There is not enough parking for the volume of traffic in Bend. You can't find a spot at the library and you cannot drop someone off in front without stopping in the street. Parking is inadequate at the main post office. Cars back up on 4th St waiting to enter creating a hazard. Downtown parking inadequate. Pickup trucks are the most popular vehicle in the country and I suspect in Bend as well. We have to accommodate pickup trucks in our parking plans.

i. Misc: Railroad underpasses on 3rd and Franklin routinely flood. That should be fixed. Permanently! Traffic lights are out of whack. If you are driving west on Neff/Penn/Olney, and are crossing 3rd it will take at least two stoplight cycles to get through. The light will only let three or four cars through at a time. Again, if pedestrians are crossing the same time, Neff/Penn/Olney comes to a halt. The light at Boyd Acres and Butler Market favors the least used feeder, Longfellow Ct. If one car is coming out of Longfellow the light continues green for almost a minute. That is very frustrating for heavy traffic on Butler Market and Boyd Acres waiting to get through that intersection.

4. Summary: Many problems and time is not on our side. I have only touched on the issues here. We need action. We also need to demand support from state and federal agencies. Our Congressman needs to be involved! I can't emphasize that enough. With all of our problems and issues, Bend can still be a model city for transportation and infrastructure improvement. We have many problems. That also means we have many opportunities.

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Bend