

Submitter: Katherine Austin
On Behalf Of: Partners for Affordable Housing
Committee: Joint Committee On Transportation Reinvestment
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB2025

Dear Co-Chairs McLain and Gorsek and Members of the Joint Committee on Transportation Reinvestment,

Our coalition, Partners for Affordable Housing, is writing today to express strong support for House Bill 2025, which includes provisions that would support funding essential, safety-focused infrastructure in Southeast Bend.

Here's why we need this funding to support safe streets AND the Governor's housing production goals:

The Southeast Bend Area is a highly valuable opportunity area for the City of Bend. Already 7,500 homes have been approved for the area, including more than 1,000 deed-restricted affordable housing units. This is the largest number of homes in the state of Oregon that have already been approved, but are unable to be built quickly and efficiently because we lack the infrastructure funding to create safe transportation access to this region of our city.

The challenge is that existing county roads in the area are woefully inadequate for managing the coming growth. In fact, these roads are so inadequate and unsafe for managing the anticipated growth that we are unable to proceed with building the thousands of homes already approved for this area.

Separately, in recent years we have seen a dramatic increase in traffic on the ODOT-managed Parkway (Highway 97) that runs through the center of Bend. Drivers regularly speed down the highway at 60 MPH in this 45 MPH zone, often in highly congested conditions.

The funding provisions in this bill for Southeast Bend will be a major asset to both the State of Oregon and to the City of Bend because if Bend can access funding, we can divert traffic from the Parkway to a corridor on the eastern edge of the city that would also serve the new opportunity area developments in Southeast Bend.

With funding from this bill, Bend can essentially create a "bypass" alternative route to the Parkway, while also ensuring that county roads are right-sized to city standards with complete streetscapes that make traveling safer for drivers, bikers and pedestrians.

The new neighborhoods planned for Southeast Bend are also the kinds of complete communities that reduce vehicle miles traveled as they will be mixed use areas with neighborhoods, parks, schools and commercial districts. But we must have the infrastructure funding to build the roads that connect it all.

Partners for Affordable Housing coalition members care so greatly about this bill

because we share a vision that housing will be available and affordable to everyone. We are a diverse coalition of impacted people and organizations developing and educating on bold solutions that increase housing supply and lower housing costs. Supporting solutions such as infrastructure funding that opens up housing production is a core mission of our organization and we are grateful to the Legislature for bringing forward bills such as HB 2025.

Developers, PAH coalition members and the City of Bend are all committed to working together to use state funding to increase traffic safety AND increase housing production. Funding transportation and safety improvements will benefit our communities with a more sustainable future and more places for all Oregonians to call home.

Thank you, again, for your leadership on this difficult challenge facing us all. We look forward to partnering with you on solutions for the benefit of everyone in our state.