

February 6, 2026

Senate Committee on Finance and Revenue

Oregon State Legislature

900 Court Street NE

Salem, Oregon 97301

RE: Support for SB 1585 — Matching Grant Caps for Small Cities

Dear Chair and Members of the Committee,

I write in support of Senate Bill 1585. I offer this perspective in two capacities: as a City Councilor for the City of Rivergrove, one of Oregon's smallest incorporated cities, and as a former member of ODOT's Small Cities Allotment Program Advisory Committee (SCAAC), where I reviewed infrastructure grant applications from small cities across the state.

Rivergrove has a population of approximately 550 and an annual general fund budget of approximately \$150,000. From this vantage point, the match requirement problem that SB 1585 addresses is not abstract—it is the single largest structural barrier preventing cities like ours from accessing state infrastructure funding.

When a state matching grant requires even a modest percentage, a city operating on \$150,000 faces a fundamentally different calculus than a city with a \$50 million budget. A 25 percent match on a \$100,000 grant consumes one-sixth of our entire annual budget. A 50 percent match on a \$200,000 grant—not uncommon in state infrastructure programs—would consume two-thirds. The result is not that we struggle to meet the match. The result is that we do not apply. Under SB 1585, our maximum match on that same \$200,000 grant would drop to 3 to 5 percent—approximately \$6,000 to \$10,000. That transforms these programs from ones that exist for us only in theory to ones we could actually use.

My time on SCAAC gave me a broader view of this challenge. The Small Cities Allotment Program is one of the rare state infrastructure programs that works for the smallest cities, in part because it was deliberately designed without a match requirement. That design choice is not accidental—it reflects the reality that match requirements, even modest ones, can be prohibitive for cities operating on budgets that most state agencies would consider a rounding error. SB 1585 would provide a statutory backstop ensuring that programs designed to reach small cities cannot have their accessibility undermined by future changes that impose match requirements these cities cannot meet.

The bill's all-phases provision is equally important. Small cities routinely lack the resources to fund the engineering and planning work required before construction grants can be awarded. By allowing grant funds to cover all project phases, SB 1585 removes a barrier that currently prevents small cities from even entering the process.

I have seen firsthand, both in Rivergrove and through my work on SCAAC, how few state programs are actually structured in a way that works for the smallest cities in Oregon. Match requirements are the single biggest reason why. SB 1585 does not eliminate match requirements. It caps them at levels that are demanding but achievable for small city budgets. That is a meaningful and overdue correction.

I respectfully urge the Committee to advance this bill.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Leah Silber". The script is cursive and fluid, with the first name "Leah" and last name "Silber" clearly distinguishable.

Leah Silber

City Councilor, City of Rivergrove

Former Member, ODOT Small Cities Allotment Program Advisory Committee (SCAAC)