



210 Laurel Avenue • Tillamook, OR 97141  
phone 503-842-2472 • fax 503-842-3445

Dear House Emergency Management, General Government, and Veterans Committee,

The City Council of Tillamook urges you to pass HB 3556 to help offset the impact of tourism on our critical services. As a coastal city, we have a tremendous amount of tourism and travelers that stay in our town and impact our services. However, like almost all of Oregon's coastal cities we have a comparatively small permanent population that bears the brunt of the cost of infrastructure and public safety. The lower permanent population not only provides a limited property tax base, which is further strangled by Measures 5 and 50, but also keeps Tillamook's portion of shared state revenues lower than is needed to address the long-term impacts of tourism.

We, like many coastal cities, do not need as much tourism promotion at present, our City's name is advertised on dairy shelves from Astoria to Boston, thanks to the amazing Tillamook Dairy and Creamery. However, we recognize that not all cities are fortunate enough to have a similar institution. HB 3556 would recognize that difference and allow Cities to utilize their funds as they need rather than a one-size fits all approach that does not, in fact, fit all. The City should be able to utilize its transient lodging taxes to help support the critical infrastructure that supports the city and the tourism industry.

Transient lodging taxes are primarily on hotels, motels and short-term rentals. There are approximately 120 local governments that levy transient lodging tax. In 2003, the state passed a preemption on local transient lodging taxes that established restrictions around how local lodging tax dollars could be spent, requiring at least 70% of new or increased taxes to go toward tourism promotion and tourism-related facilities and reserving the remaining 30% for local discretionary spending. Under current court interpretations, existing definitions of tourism promotion and tourism-related facilities only leave local jurisdictions so much leeway to respond to those strains. Right now, communities bear the burden of maintaining and operating things that directly benefit tourists that are primarily funded by and for community members, like public safety, and community infrastructure. When you have a huge rush of tourists who come over a weekend and double the population for some communities, roads, trails and parks wear out a lot faster, water systems are strained, and public safety call volumes increase.

HB 3556 creates additional flexibility by adding a third definition to the 70% restricted funds for "tourism-impacted services." Tourism impacted services include public safety (fire, EMS, and police) and community infrastructure (water, wastewater, transportation, parks, trails and public amenities).

We support HB 3556 because:

- Voters support it. A 2024 public opinion poll found that over 70% of voters support changing the law so that a larger portion of local TLT revenue can be used to fund vital city services— helping sustain and enhance tourism by addressing its impacts, rather than disproportionately allocating funds to traditional tourism promotion.



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- It reexamines a longstanding preemption so communities rethink how tourism related (TLT) revenues and balances impacts on communities so that it is mutually beneficial to businesses, tourists, and community members. Under HB 4146(2016), the state reduced the amount of “tourism promotion” spending from 80% to 65% because they found other ways to support a tourism economy outside of promotion.
- It will ensure communities remain safe. Each year, a significant number of visitors across Oregon interact with local law enforcement and the justice system. In Clatsop County, one-third of all jail bookings, arrests, and tickets are non-residents. Tourism also increases demand for local resources to respond to accidents and incidents on highways and recreational sites. In rural areas, volunteer-staffed fire agencies are under substantial strain with their workload, financial capacity, and staffing.
- More tourists are staying in vacation rentals through Airbnb and VRBO, not hotels and motels, that increase use of community infrastructure in neighborhoods not tourist areas of a community like the downtown core. Currently, \$633 million annually is needed to address cities’ transportation operations and maintenance deficit and \$5.2 billion for cities’ water needs.
- Outdoor recreation is critical to Oregon’s tourism economy and trails, campgrounds, boat ramps, parking areas and more—are seeing historic use levels that are outpacing critical maintenance. According to 2023 Oregon Park and Recreation Provider Survey Report, most park operators have on average \$5 to 9 million in deferred maintenance.

With the added flexibility provided by HB3556 the City could finally fully staff and fund our Police Department and potentially provide for much needed sewer and water system repairs and upgrades. Tourists will not come to places where they do not feel safe, nor will they stay in places with substandard water and sewer services.

On behalf of the Tillamook City Council, I thank you for your service to our state and for your consideration of our needs.

Sincerely,

Aaron Burris,  
Mayor, City of Tillamook