



February 8, 2024

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Senate Committee on Housing and Development

Oregon State Legislature

900 Court St. NE, Salem, OR 97301

#### Re: Support Senate Bill 1537 to provide affordable housing for Oregonians—if amended to remove UGB expansion loopholes

Dear Chair Jama, Vice-Chair Anderson, and members of the Committee:

Better Eugene-Springfield Transportation is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit that is building a successful community by bringing people together to promote transportation options, safe streets, and walkable neighborhoods.

## Support

In general, BEST supports Governor Tina Kotek's efforts to provide affordable housing for Oregonians.

In particular, we support these elements of Senate Bill 1537:

- Infrastructure funding that prioritizes affordable housing within existing urban growth boundaries.
- Prioritizing building in livable, walkable neighborhoods.
- Climate-smart incentives.
- Housing Accountability and Production Office.

## Oppose

But we oppose this element and urge the Committee to amend the bill:

- Unnecessary UGB expansion loopholes that push struggling people farther from their communities and resource networks.

Under the subtitle “One-Time Site Additions to Urban Growth Boundaries,” Sections 49–60 would create harmful loopholes within ORS Chapter 197A: Land Use Planning: Housing and Urbanization.

These loopholes would actually undermine the primary goal to provide affordable housing. Although increasing the supply of land by fast-tracking some kinds of urban growth boundary expansions might reduce the cost of raw land, doing so actually increases other public and private costs.

Building a successful community by bringing people together  
to promote transportation options, safe streets, and walkable neighborhoods.

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BEST is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit. Contributions are tax-deductible to the extent the law allows. Tax ID #42-1661720.

### **Housing developed near UGB increases *public costs*.**

Developing housing near an urban growth boundary increases the *public* costs of urban facilities and services under Statewide Planning Goal 11: Public Facilities and Services and Statewide Planning Goal 12: Transportation. These include the costs of police protection; sanitary facilities; storm drainage facilities; planning, zoning and subdivision control; health services; recreation facilities and services; energy and communication services; and community governmental services; and transportation facilities and services.

Although it might be tempting to discount such public costs, even a small UGB expansion contributes to the need to eventually make costly expenditures. Such public costs must be prorated and charged against so-called “affordable housing.”

### **Housing developed near UGB increases *private costs*.**

Moreover, the cost of **housing** represents only part of the larger cost of living for households. For those struggling to make ends meet, the cost of **transportation** is often as significant.

Housing built near the center of a community tends to be closer to essentials of daily life: school, work, shopping, medical appointments, and more. In some cases, it is more practical to walk, bike, or take the bus to some of these needs, reducing the need for a struggling family to incur the expense of owning and maintaining a motor vehicle.

On the other hand, housing built near an urban growth boundary is more likely to be too far from essentials of daily life to walk or bicycle, and poorly served, if at all, by public bus service. It is well established that sprawl—expanding an urban growth boundary more and more—increases vehicles miles traveled.<sup>1</sup> As such, people living near an urban growth boundary are more likely to be forced to pay for a motor vehicle.

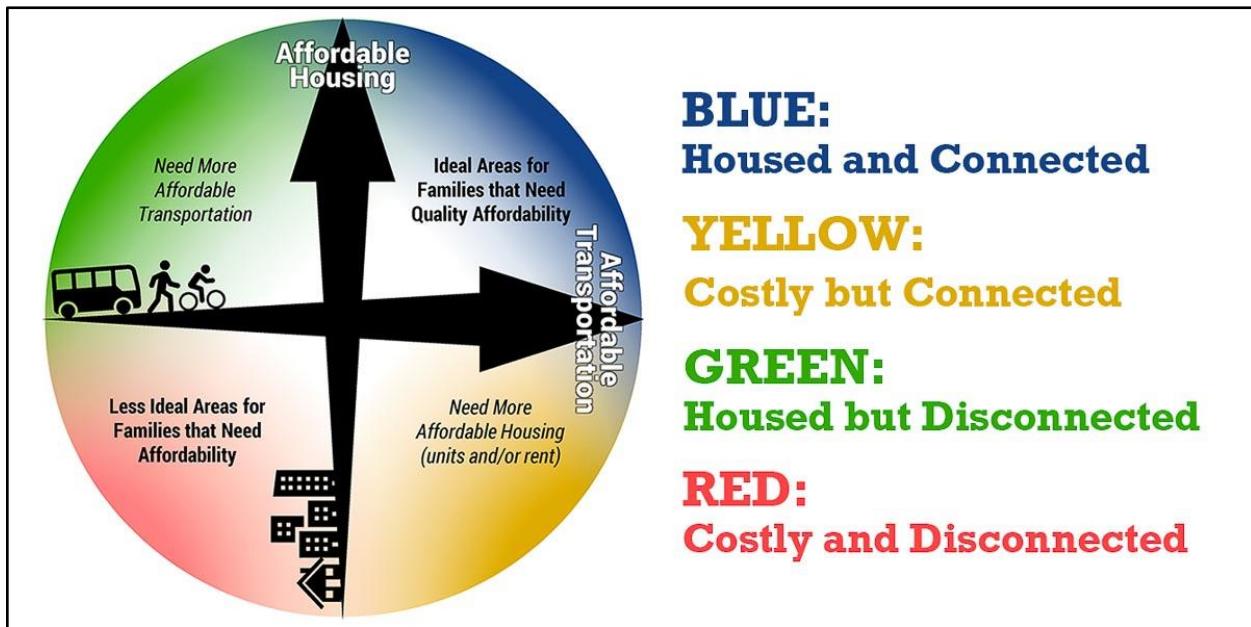
One can map how the location of housing affects the overall costs of living. The Housing and Transportation (H+T®) Affordability Index provides a comprehensive view of affordability that includes the costs of housing and transportation at the neighborhood level.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> For example, see National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, “Chapter 3: Impacts of Land Use Patterns on Vehicle Miles Traveled: Evidence from the Literature,” in *Driving and the Built Environment: The Effects of Compact Development on Motorized Travel, Energy Use, and CO<sub>2</sub> Emissions*. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press, 2009. <https://nap.nationalacademies.org/read/12747/chapter/5>.

<sup>2</sup> Center for Neighborhood Technology, Housing and Transportation (H+T®) Affordability Index. <https://htaindex.cnt.org>.

For example, LINK Houston has mapped out where affordable housing and transportation meet, identifying four different kinds of areas:<sup>3</sup>



*Affordable H + T Paradigm. Source: LINK Houston*

### Housing developed near UGB undermines other state goals.

For example, as noted above, sprawl tends to increase vehicle miles traveled. Hence sprawl tends to increase greenhouse gas emissions from motor vehicles, undermining the state goal to slow climate change.

**In conclusion, BEST supports Senate Bill 1537 to provide affordable housing for Oregonians—if amended to remove UGB expansion loopholes.**

For BEST,

*Rob Zako*

Rob Zako,  
Executive Director

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<sup>3</sup> LINK Houston in partnership with Rice University's Kinder Institute for Urban Research, *Where Affordable Housing and Transportation Meet in Houston*, May 2020. <https://linkhouston.org/reports-briefings/houston-housing-transportation-affordability-2020/>