

BEAVERTON AREA  
Chamber of Commerce



July 7, 2020

To: METRO Council Members

From: Beaverton Area Chamber of Commerce

RE: Get Moving 2020

Dear Metro Council –

The Beaverton Area Chamber of Commerce has long recognized and championed for transportation solutions to support congestion reduction and freight mobility in the metropolitan area. We have proudly supported MSTIP for years as well as efforts at the State level including the I-5 Columbia River Crossing. We recognize a viable multi-modal transportation system is essential to a vibrant business community and until now, we have been a solid proponent of addressing transportation upgrades that address the commute burdens on Highway 26, 217, 99, etc.

Our world has changed though. The needs of our members and the needs of our community have changed dramatically due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Despite our past support for a multitude of transportation needs in the past, we find ourselves in a contrary position at this time and find it exceedingly difficult to understand how Metro could contemplate putting a near 100% tax burden through payroll taxes to fund the \$7 billion Get Moving 2020 initiative. During this unprecedented, and frankly economically devastated period of COVID-19 pandemic, it is perilous to even consider placing another tax burden on our businesses and their employees this fall. We are not even able to move to Phase II of re-opening as cases are surging and we remain in the “first wave” of this pandemic. We are being threatened by these rising numbers which may result in another long-term shutdown. We have businesses that have closed forever and employment still woefully below pre-COVID levels. *The COVID pandemic has dramatically changed who works, how they work, how they may work in the future, how people travel or if they travel. It has forever impacted the current and future needs of our community.* As employees, employers and your tax base, we have been forced to pause and we respectfully request that Metro take this opportunity to pause as well.

The investments in the Metro Get Moving 2020 plan appear to still be focused on the pre-COVID plan: More bike lanes, traffic signals, sidewalks, mass transit and “studying future needs.” We believe strongly that the plan needs to be reassessed and reprioritized for our post-pandemic reality, which is yet to be known in full.

Metro so far has elected to not take a pause in proposing new taxes but the sources of those tax dollars have been forced to pause, adapt or quite frankly disappear. It would be a welcome sign of a thoughtful Metro Council to pause long enough to assess the Get Moving 2020 Plan in light of the new realities we all face and consider the urgent needs for true short and long term economic recovery in our community for our community to be able to afford these transportation investments.

Here are a few direct thoughts from local business owners whose employees are just getting back to work to support their families and recover from losses due to COVID-19:

"Surviving 2020 and the foreseeable future will be an incredible challenge for my family business and increasing payroll taxes will only make it harder. I can't think of a worse time to increase payroll taxes because it punishes local employers for keeping people employed during a global pandemic." *Owner, Mark Spiegelberg, THE BARBERS*

“Due to the constraints caused by the COVID-19 Pandemic and additional expenses to reopen, any increase in payroll taxes at this time will cause unbearable additional financial burdens.” *Owner, Keith Wright, Century 21 Wright and Associates*

“Small business is wounded – many on life support and many fatally. Adding additional tax burdens at this time is adding another dagger to body of small business. You will only cause more unemployment. Your actions do not match your words when you say “small business is the life of our community”.” *Owner, Amy Saberiyan, Ava Roasteria*

We urge you to please reconsider the plan, its’ costs, its’ priorities, and the timing of adding yet another tax burden to the diminishing working population of our community.

We wish you all good health and thank you for your thoughtful consideration.

Sincerely,



Lorraine Clarno, President/CEO  
BACC



Steve Smelley, Chair BAC  
Founder: Goldfinch Consulting



Keith Wright, Board Chair  
Owner: Century 21 Wright & Assoc.

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