

## **METRO 2026 LEGISLATIVE ISSUE IDENTIFICATION**

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**Person completing form/Department:** Kyung Park, GAPD

**Date:** November 13, 2025

**ISSUE:** Food and beverage as official compensation

### **BACKGROUND:**

In September of 2024, the City of Beaverton requested advice from the Oregon Government Ethics Commission (OGEC) regarding food and beverage being served at an upcoming team building event. The Mayor sought guidance on whether city officials and their families can accept food and beverage served at the event sponsored by the City.

The guidance issued by OGEC determined that employees and public officials can accept the food and beverage at city sponsored events if the food and beverage was part of their official compensation package. The City needed to adopt policy to reflect food and beverage as part of the total compensation package before employees and public officials can accept food and beverage provided by the City.

In May of 2025, the League of Oregon Cities requested clarifying advice for a handful of similar scenarios such as potlucks and meals provided during meetings. OGEC issued advice that government-provided food and beverage is compensation and not a gift.

This recent determination created complications for agencies, boards, and commissions where members are not allowed by charter to accept any form of compensation. When these charters were adopted, food and beverage were not considered a form of compensation but instead courtesy for meetings held during regular mealtimes. This impacts Metro directly. For example, Metro's Future Vision Commission members are not allowed to accept any form of compensation, but meetings can occur during regular mealtimes.

### **RECOMMENDATION:**

Support exceptions to requirements that food and beverage offerings be formally included as part of official compensation packages. The current requirements prohibit members of some advisory committees and commissions from accepting food and beverages during meetings that can sometimes occur during regular mealtimes. Support legislation that allows reasonable food and beverage offerings by the public body during these meetings or other official events.

### **LEGISLATIVE HISTORY:**

Oregon's government ethics law was established by a statewide ballot measure in 1974 in response to the Watergate scandal and public calls for greater government accountability. Approved by more than 70% of voters, this measure created the independent Oregon Government Ethics Commission and established the initial set of laws (ORS Chapter 244). The

intent of ORS Chapter 244 has consistently been to prevent public officials from using their position for personal financial gain.

Two bills, HB 2595 in 2007 and SB 30 in 2009, made significant revisions to Oregon's government ethics laws including an expansion of prohibitions on using public offices for financial gain. Since then, the core statute remained intact with some minor administrative changes. Current interpretations of the law have been shaped by court decisions and advice given by OGEC.

OGEC analyzed sections of ORS Chapter 244, specifically gift laws and prohibited uses of office laws, when it determined that food and beverage provided by a public body must be part of a compensation package.

**OTHER INTERESTED PARTIES:**

Key parties with a high level of interest include local governments both individually and through the League of Oregon Cities (LOC) and the Association of Oregon Counties (AOC); community colleges, school boards, and other special districts.

**IMPACT IF PROPOSED ACTION OCCURS:**

- Metro may provide food and beverages at meetings and gatherings to all attendees including committee and commission meetings where charters prohibit members from receiving compensation.
- Reduction in administrative burden for public officials and agencies.

**RACIAL EQUITY IMPACTS**

None

**CLIMATE IMPACTS**

None