



PORTLAND PARKS & RECREATION

Healthy Parks, Healthy Portland

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Contact:

Mark Ross, Public Information Officer
503-823-5300; cell 503-823-6634

Portland Parks & Recreation Survey Shows Support for Parks Replacement Bond:

Respondents Strongly in Favor of Funding Critical Parks Repairs without Increasing Tax Rates

(Portland, OR) –

In order to assess support for a possible parks replacement bond, Parks Commissioner Amanda Fritz and Portland Parks & Recreation commissioned [DHM Research](#) to conduct a representative telephone survey of Portlanders. The survey shows that, once Portlanders find out that a replacement bond would not increase tax rates and would fund some of the most critical repairs to our parks system, more than 65% are supportive.

Commissioner Fritz will now open this dialogue to the larger community and parks stakeholders. Meetings and additional survey exercises, including a Town Hall TBA, will take place during the month of June culminating in an expanded Parks Budget Advisory Committee in early July.

"I am cautiously optimistic that the survey indicates Portlanders may be willing to invest in crucial repairs to our Parks facilities," said Commissioner Fritz. "I find it heartening that Portlanders recognize the need for investment. Still, we need to do more work to finalize our recommendation on whether to proceed with a bond replacement."

"We have a nationally recognized parks system because of a 150 year legacy of public stewardship," says Portland Parks & Recreation Director Mike Abbaté. "I am pleased that the commissioner is having serious discussions on the critical maintenance needs across our parks system, including replacing aging playgrounds, fixing unsafe trails, and other major repairs which currently lack funding."

The survey was conducted from May 21-23, 2014, and interviewed 800 likely voters. Some questions were split sampled to compare alternative versions. The survey's margin of error ranges from $\pm 3.5\%$ (N=800) to $\pm 4.9\%$ (N=400). DHM Research has produced the following key findings and attached detailed results.

Background:

Portlanders have preserved and built our incredible parks system through a series of capital investments (bonds, levies) over the last century. Portlanders last passed a parks bond in 1994. Portlanders will soon fully repay that bond and it expires next year. Also, over the next ten years, Portland's parks will need more than \$365 million in replacement and maintenance projects. This provides a unique opportunity – if Portlanders continue to make the same rate of payments on property taxes over the next 20 years, it can generate an estimated \$56-\$68 million in bond revenue to pay for critical repairs to our parks system. Commissioner Fritz and Portland Parks & Recreation are looking into whether we should replace the bond without increasing tax rates. Conducting this representative telephone survey is the first step in this process.

Replacing the expiring bond would generate an estimated \$56-\$68 million to fund critical repairs, such as:

- The replacement of deteriorating playgrounds, including the Couch Park structure serving the Metropolitan Learning Center (MLC) Portland Public school, which recently had to be removed due to potentially catastrophic failure
- Reopening and stabilizing trails such as the closed Maple Trail in Forest Park
- Repairing community swimming pools to prevent emergency closures and extend usable life
- Ensuring that more facilities and natural areas are safe and accessible to all, including people with disabilities
- Making repairs and protecting worker safety at Mount Tabor Yard
- Making much-needed structural repairs to Pioneer Courthouse Square
- Making other major maintenance repairs like restoring restrooms, fixing leaking roofs, and more

Homeowners currently pay \$.0877/\$1000 on their assessed property value (AV) for the expiring 1994 parks bond. A replacement bond measure would replace the expiring one – without increasing property tax rates. If the 1994 bond expires in 2015 and is not replaced, the annual property tax rate paid by a typical homeowner with a home valued at \$150,000 would decrease by \$13.⁽¹⁾

NOTE: ⁽¹⁾ *The property tax levy rate for the expiring bonds is approximately \$0.0877 per \$1,000 of assessed value. This is the estimated levy rate for November 2014. The proposed debt service of the new bonds would maintain the same levy rate of approximately \$0.0877 beginning in November 2015. As the levy rate would stay approximately the same, the actual amount each taxpayer pays annually may change based upon possible changes in assessed value of individual property. Collection of property taxes to repay the potential new bonds would not happen until after the current bond expires.*

DHM Survey Key Findings:

With minimal information, Portlanders express support for a parks bond at 48% supporting (26% strong support, 22% somewhat support) and 12% not sure.

Support jumps to 68% (with 40% strong support) when Portlanders learn the bond is a replacement bond and will fund critical parks repairs *without increasing tax rates*.

Even after learning that property taxes would go down if voters reject a bond, voters choose to keep tax rates level in order to make critical investments in our parks system.

Opposition to the measure only grows by a few percentage points (and support drops to 65%) when Portlanders are given opposition rationale about why not to support the replacement bond.

Among the top projects to support within the replacement bond: replacement of deteriorating playgrounds leads the pack, followed by repairing trails and bridges and conducting major repairs on community swimming pools in order to prevent closures.

Portlanders outline key reasons to support the replacement bond as being:

- because it would not increase the tax rate
- because it would focus on safety and critical repairs, and
- because it would fund removing barriers and making parks system more accessible to all, including people with disabilities.

Portlanders love their parks systems, with a large majority (87%) ranking the quality of service as very good (32%) or good (55%).

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