

The Oregonian

Portland street fee: City unveils potential six-year wish list for safety projects topping \$109 million

By Andrew Theen
August 27, 2014

Portland transportation officials continue to run the gauntlet of committee meetings as the summer of the street fee rapidly comes to a close for City Hall leaders.

On Tuesday, at the latest meeting of one of those city-appointed groups, the Transportation Needs and Funding Advisory Committee, the city produced the most detailed list to date of potential transportation projects.

It's a wish list, and admittedly in draft form (The document handed out Tuesday was titled: Safety project list - Straw-man ***Draft Low-Confidence Cost Estimates ***).

But PBOT leaders gave a snapshot of the type of safety improvements they'd like to accomplish during a six-year period. The list included an estimated \$109 million in dozens of specifically identified sidewalks, pedestrian crossing, bicycle and other safety projects.

PBOT's figures are based on roughly \$35 million annually in net revenue for a six year period. The PBOT "straw man" document factors in a 50/50 revenue split, with half going to maintenance and half to pavement maintenance projects. There's a \$3.5 million shortfall in what the city specifically identified as doable projects and the projected current revenue.

Again, none of the projects are prioritized.

Here's the overarching breakdown of where safety money could go:

Portland 6-year safety project wish list			
Categories	Identified projects	Revenue estimated	Balance (parentheses = shortfall)
High Crash Corridors	\$20.3 million	\$21.6 million	\$1.3 million
Crossing Improvements	\$4.26 million	\$14.4 million	\$10.14 million
Sidewalks	\$39.38 million	\$24 million	(\$15.38 million)
Protected Bike Routes	\$9.3 million	\$9.6 million	\$300,000
Safe Routes to School	\$24 million	\$24 million	--
Neighborhood Greenway	\$6.3 million	\$6 million	(\$334,393)
Low Cost Solutions	\$5.5 million	\$6 million	\$500,000
Total	\$109 million	\$105.6 million	(\$3.5 million)

Here's a breakdown of some of the highest line items spending projects on the proposed draft document:

\$10 million - Sidewalk infill on SW Capitol Highway, from Multnomah Village to West Portland)

\$8 million - 122nd Avenue safety improvements including sidewalks, crossing improvements and striping/signalization changes (results in TriMet frequent service line)

\$5 million - Southwest Neighborhood Tier 3 sidewalk priorities

\$4.65 million - sidewalk infill Northeast 111th from Klickitat to Halsey

\$3 million - three separate protected bike routes, each totaling \$3 million, in N/NE Broadway, Central City and Flanders.

(All figures about come from the PBOT documents. I will scan and upload documents later on Wednesday)

A refresher, Mayor Charlie Hales and Commissioner Steve Novick floated a monthly street fee for residents and business owners in May, then tabled the plan and said they'd revisit the issue in November after public outcry.

Time is increasingly of the essence, as the three committees working on various aspects of the street funding debate tackle what's the best tool to raise millions annually for road safety and maintenance projects.

"I don't know what they're going to do in November if we don't get recommendations out of the two committees," Fred Miler, Portland's chief administrative officer said Tuesday referring to business and nonprofit/low income working groups created in June. "But politicians do what they're going to do," he added.

White men diversity retreat -- breaking down the \$56,000 contract: Portland City Hall Roundup

*By Brad Schmidt
August 26, 2014*

Last month, Portland Mayor Charlie Hales, Police Chief Mike Reese and 14 other city employees attended a three-day diversity conference for white men near Mt. Hood.

The city contracted to pay up to \$56,000 for the event, organized by White Men as Full Diversity Partners.

The Oregonian requested the city's contract with the company under the state's public records law. According to the contract, here's the scope of work that Bill and Steve Proudman -- who each bill at \$300 an hour -- provided city employees:

- "Gain a systemic perspective and understanding of the costs of racism, sexism, heterosexism, oppression, and unexamined privilege
- Recognize themselves as individuals and as members of the white male group
- Become a more committed and active partner in diversity efforts
- Learn to create supportive systems that enhance learning
- Develop specific personal and professional action plans"

Additionally, Hales was slated to meet with the company for an hour before and an hour after the retreat for private coaching to discuss his "role in leading the change effort."

The city's involvement in the conference prompted wide media attention. In response, Bill Proudman, who founded the company, said the attention underscored the difficulty of talking about race in Portland.

"When white men come to better realize their self-interest and how it intersects with others, they became more courageous and less fearful," he wrote in an opinion piece. "The pace of change accelerates when white men challenge and support each other to shift their peer culture toward inclusion. Knowing they have something meaningful to contribute, they engage in meaningful partnerships with women and

people of color and with other white men. Many white men see diversity for the first time as their issue rather than someone else's."

The company's work isn't done.

Proudman is also supposed to provide employees with a follow-up session, six to 10 weeks after the July 7-10 event, that will run up to a full day. During the follow-up session, the company will help employees "integrate their learning and apply new skills within the work setting."

Costs for the training break down like this:

\$38,000 – White Men's three-day caucus

\$1,000 (not to exceed) – travel related expenses

\$13,000 (not to exceed) – lodging, food and beverage plus meeting fees and expenses at The Resort at The Mountain in Welches.

\$4,000 – follow-up session of up to 8 hours.

According to the contract, city leaders get to choose the location for the follow-up training.

Tiny homes, big ideas, a scarcity of information: Editorial Agenda 2014

*By The Oregonian Editorial Board
August 24, 2014*

Portland's plan to build tiny one- or two-room houses on publicly owned land to accommodate homeless and low-income people has enormous surface appeal: Who would argue that a roof overhead isn't better than a tent or, worse, a highway overpass?

For the homeless person, dignity is at stake, not to mention the possibility of rebuilding a life requiring it and the fitness to find work. For those with very low incomes and priced out of an expensive rental market, stability and a place to call home are required to plan and to prosper.

But those attributes are gauzy log lines to a stage play without structure. Portland Mayor Charlie Hales' top policy adviser, Josh Alpert, in assuring Portlanders that heated, plumbed micro-homes would be coming to town, said Hales was "infatuated" with the idea and issued the admonishment, "Let's figure it out," The Oregonian's Andrew Theen reported.

Yes: Let's do that. Better yet: Let's figure it out before committing to it.

Tiny homes are hot. A glowing report on them surfaced this year from Tacoma, Wash., where an itinerant homeless group living in tents had moved 20 times before landing at Quixote Village, a \$3 million cluster of tiny structures on 2.1 acres of land leased to the village by Thurston County for \$1 a year, The New York Times reported. Separately, reports have surfaced from San Jose, Calif.; Austin, Texas; and Madison, Wisconsin, where those cities, struggling to meet the needs of burgeoning homeless populations, explored the use of tiny homes, or better-than-backyard sheds typically offering one cozy room, electricity and, in some cases, flush toilets.

Portland's iteration of the tiny home would be roughly 16 feet by 12 feet in size, accommodate two adults or a family, and cost an estimated \$12,000 to build, exclusive of sewer and electricity hookups, Theen reported. TriMet, Portland Public Schools and Multnomah County will be called upon for an inventory of property that presumably would generate several candidate sites, allowing productive and humanitarian use of available public land. Multnomah County Commission Chair Deborah Kafoury lent her immediate support.

The city and the county need to slow down. Nobody wants homeless people, or those in poverty, to endure the elements and broad-spectrum vulnerability. But before proceeding, city planners – none so far, significantly, from the Portland Housing Bureau – must ensure that basic questions are answered:

Who gets in? How much would a tenant with income pay? Is there an expiration date on tenancy? Who governs and enforces rules at a 25-housing-unit cluster situated on public land? How are micro-communities a good-bang-for-the-buck option for taxpayers when Portland's homeless population is estimated at 2,000?

How, meanwhile, is a micro-community substantively different from Dignity Village, the anomaly of alternative homeless housing near Portland International Airport? Dignity Village started as temporary but has become, by the weight of its presence and disinclination of many of its residents to move on, a permanent colony of makeshift structures. Nobody in city government quite knows what it is or what its future holds.

Questions only multiply, the most basic the most challenging of all: How do tiny homes fit into the city's portfolio of public and assisted-housing options, typically designed to provide not only shelter but social services that pave a pathway out and up?

Then there is Right 2 Dream Too, the homeless camp at the Chinatown gate in downtown Portland. Like a ship that can't quite land, R2DToo struggles to find a new home – this after the city failed in selecting from among more than 20 candidate sites with more than \$800,000 in developer money to do so. R2DToo is a prime candidate to become a micro-community of tiny homes, certainly, just as the peripatetic, Tacoma-based Camp Quixote was before becoming Quixote Village. Would R2DToo enjoy first dibs?

It's time for homework before this can be declared promising or simply trash-canned. Let's do figure this out. Portlanders should know what they're getting into before the city seriously considers undertaking anything of this financial and social scale.

Willamette Week

Blocked Path

West Hills neighbors push back against plans to expand the Japanese Garden.

*By Rebecca Turley
August 27, 2014*

A well-trodden path nestled near the edge of Portland's Japanese Garden winds into Forest Park, the city's 5,167-acre urban green space. A sign reads, "Path to Wildwood Trail," marking one of the most popular access points to the park for hikers and joggers.

But the leafy, ivy-lined path is stirring discord in the West Hills. On Aug. 28, the Japanese Garden and residents of one of Portland's most affluent neighborhoods will argue before the City Council over what constitutes an official walking trail.

Their disagreement, however, is much broader.

The dispute is also about what happens when parties try to decide who should control park land within the city—a well-connected, private nonprofit or taxpayers.

The Japanese Garden and the city's Bureau of Development Services say the path leading to Wildwood Trail is unofficial—it doesn't really exist because it's not on any map.

In June, the bureau approved development plans for the garden that would block access to the path. The Arlington Heights Neighborhood Association and neighborhood resident Hilary Mackenzie separately appealed that decision.

The bureau says the path wasn't shown in the garden's application.

"If it's not official, then it's not a map trail," says Kathleen Stokes, a representative for the bureau. "How can we review something that doesn't exist?"

Mackenzie says that argument is ridiculous.

“My goal is to get this back in the public realm,” she says. “This is a complicated issue, and there needs to be a full discussion about it.”

Founded in 1963 and built to accommodate 30,000 visitors annually, the Japanese Garden now attracts 300,000 visitors a year, making it one of the city’s top tourist attractions.

Garden officials want to construct new buildings beyond the 9.1 acres leased from Portland Parks & Recreation, increasing the garden’s footprint to 12.5 acres. They plan to add new gardens and build a “cultural village,” with an administration building, learning centers, a gallery, a gift store, a garden house, and a tea cafe, more than doubling the square footage of buildings on the property from 10,800 to 22,400 square feet.

Right now, the “unofficial” trail entrance lies outside the garden. But under the new design, it would give visitors a back-door entry into the Japanese Garden—without paying admission.

To prevent this, garden officials have proposed just one option: fencing off the path entrance as part of the 16-month construction project.

Mackenzie is torn because she loves the Japanese Garden but resents the influence it appears to have with its landlord, the city.

“This shouldn’t be about who’s got power and money in Portland,” she says.

Other Arlington neighborhood residents agree. Rather than focusing on the fact that there’s another entrance to the Wildwood Trail just four-tenths of a mile from the disputed path, they’ve retained Steve Janik, one of Oregon’s top land-use lawyers.

“This is a public park and should stay a public park,” Arlington Neighborhood Association president Susan Siegel says.

Over the past two years, representatives of the garden held meetings with the neighborhood to explain its expansion plans. But critics say they only showed conceptual designs at those meetings.

“When we first got news of expansion, everybody thought it was more like cherry trees and bushes and water,” Mackenzie says. “We thought, this is great!”

The neighborhood association OK’d the garden’s plans in March.

“We were told in March that the neighborhood fully supported the plan,” says Cynthia Haruyama, deputy director of the Japanese Garden Society. “Now they’ve objected to a whole number of things.”

Haruyama says it’s the right plan.

“Sure, [Arlington residents] have ideas, but they are not necessarily viable,” she says.

The City Council can uphold, overturn or amend the garden’s expansion plans after next week’s hearing.

Mackenzie holds out hope that the City Council will decide parks belong to the people rather than private nonprofits.

“It’s not free real estate that people can develop if they have the right connections,” Mackenzie says. “If you want development in parks, it should be a big, public process.”