

The Oregonian

City eyes \$160,000 grant for art, 'place making' along Foster Road: Portland City Hall Roundup

By Andrew Theen

October 27, 2014

Southeast Foster Road, already a major traffic thoroughfare and increasingly active commercial corridor, could see more change, and art, if Portland planners have their way.

Transportation officials want to pursue a \$160,000 grant from ArtPlace America, an organization backed by a consortium of heavy-hitting foundations such as the Rockefeller, Ford, Knight, Barr and others, including Michael Bloomberg's philanthropic organization.

Applications for the ArtPlace grant are due by Nov. 3, according to the group's website. Organizers expect to fund 40 projects this year. Last year the competition drew 1,300 applicants from across the U.S.

Portland already envisions significant changes to Foster Road.

Earlier this year, the City Council approved a \$5.25 million streetscape plan for a 40-block section of Foster Road (which stretches out to Interstate 205) with the aim of creating a "Main Street" feel along the roadway.

If Portland wins an ArtPlace grant, the money would go to "streetscape enhancements and place-making activities" along Foster.

That means the potential addition of street seats, artsy bike racks, and ways to bring activity to "underutilized alleyways," according to city council documents.

The Portland City Council will consider whether to sign off on the grant application on Wednesday.

Portland speeding toward a street-tax disaster: Editorial Agenda 2014

By The Oregonian Editorial Board

October 26, 2014

The time of year when people wish for things is rapidly approaching. In that spirit, we make this wish for residents of Portland: We wish that Portland city councilors decide not to complete their headlong rush toward a street tax disaster. Cross your fingers, Portland.

The city's tax rush began this year following a protracted period in which, according to a 2013 city audit, "City Council chose to invest in competing transportation priorities without an overall strategy, allowing future costs for restoring street pavement to multiply." This period of neglect, which saw street maintenance funding fall even as overall transportation revenue climbed, created a crumbling-road problem that would, the city estimated, require an annual infusion of \$75 million for 10 years.

Their predecessors having allowed the city's infrastructure to degrade at their leisure, Mayor Charlie Hales and Commissioner Steve Novick tried to impose fees and taxes in haste. The attempt failed even as the street tax twins insisted that the ever-climbing deferred-maintenance price tag had topped \$90 million per year. Gadzooks!

Fast forward several months, and commissioners are considering a proposal that would collect from businesses and residents combined about \$40 million per year, of which, The Oregonian's Brad Schmidt reported, only 42 percent of a net \$29 million would be spent on paving. Given the \$90-million hard sell by Novick and Hales just months ago, you'd think every cent of the net would be used to correct the underlying problem, wouldn't you?

The proposal's flaws don't end there. Even worse is the transformation of the residential component into an income-based tax, which necessarily exempts various kinds of income. These include Social Security

income and – of particular note to Portlanders concerned with fairness – federal and state public pension income. Thus, while 401(k), investment and private sector pension income will be fair game for taxation, income derived from the Federal Employees Retirement System and Oregon's Public Employees Retirement System will not.

It's hard to know exactly how many public pension recipients would be exempted from the road tax and how much the city would lose as a result. But city officials estimate that the PERS/FERS exemption would reduce gross tax revenue by about \$299,000 per year, though imperfect compliance would shrink that number somewhat. Gross losses due to the exemption of Social Security, which is collected by a much greater number of filers, would be \$551,000 per year.

The significance of pension-related losses depends upon your point of view. While city officials didn't try to guess how many filers would be attached to this lost revenue, \$299,000 is the equivalent of about 4,150 single filers paying the \$6 monthly tax that would be applied under the city's scheme to people making between \$25,000 and \$42,000 per year.

Single filers who make less than \$25,000 per year, meanwhile, would be exempt from the tax entirely, leaving the obligation to repair core infrastructure enjoyed by all residents to everyone else. Under the latest scenarios, the city estimates that about 41 percent of filers would not pay the tax. The income cutoff is a product of a laudable desire to treat people fairly. But declining to assess even a token tax to so many people for the preservation of a shared resource is civically corrosive. It encourages taxpayers to consider the funding of basic services as someone else's responsibility rather than their own.

If this tax is the best the city can devise, commissioners should do their constituents a favor and start from scratch with something simple and straightforward. A Eugene model, which combines a local gas tax (Multnomah County has one) with voter-approved bond measures would be a great improvement. It would have the added benefit of requiring a public vote up front, which is something some on city council would prefer not to do regardless of how inequitable and complex their favored tax happens to be.

If commissioners soldier on instead and approve a flawed tax on the day before Thanksgiving, as their schedule indicates they may, they'll ensure that Portlanders are served turkey two days in a row.

The Portland Tribune

City responds to Comp Plan concerns

*By Jim Redden
October 26, 2014*

Portland planners admit that some residents are concerned the City Council will update the Comprehensive Plan before the zoning details are known.

Representatives of the Multnomah Neighborhood Association and other Portland citizens have argued they cannot evaluate the proposed updates without knowing how they will be enacted. They are especially concerned about changes in Mixed Use Zones, which is where much of Portland's increased density is suppose to occur. Concerns have also been exposed about Campus Institution areas, such as schools and hospitals.

"Many participants in the Comprehensive Plan Update process have expressed concern about the City making decisions about land use changes without a clear idea of what new zoning code could look like for mixed use areas and campus institutions," the Bureau of Planning and Sustainability writes in an October Special Edition email newsletter on the plan update.

However, the newsletter says, the council has no choice but to consider the update first because of state Periodic Review policies that governing the Comp Plan update.

"Land use designations and zoning are under different parts of the State of Oregon's Periodic Review requirement," says the newsletter, which explains the Goals, Policies and Land Use Map must be adopted before the Zoning Code and Zoning Map Adjustments.

BPS, which is staffing the Comp Plan update process, has extended the deadline for public comments on it until March 31, 2015.

And BPS has scheduled two public meetings for the public to learn more about the Mixed Use Zone planning process:

- November 5, 2014, 6 p.m. - 9 p.m.; 1900 SW 4th Ave, Room 2500 (2nd Floor).
- November 6, 2014, 6 p.m. - 9 p.m.; Jefferson High School, 5210 N Kerby Ave (cafeteria).
- Agendas for both meetings include staff presentations and work sessions.
- These forums will take place after the final two public hearings on the Comp Plan update before the Planning and Sustainability Commission:
- Tuesday, October 28, 5 – 9 p.m., Portland Community College SE Campus, Community Hall, 2305 SE 82nd Ave.
- Tuesday, November 4, 5 – 9 p.m. 1900 SW 4th Ave, Suite 2500.

The Portland Tribune previously reported on the Mixed Use Zone process at <http://portlandtribune.com/pt/9-news/236993-98606-citys-growth-plan-hits-the-busy-streets>.

Willamette Week

Neighborhood Coalition Says Airbnb Hosts Are Failing to Get New City Permits

*By Aaron Mesh
October 24, 2014*

Nearly three months after Portland City Hall legalized short-term rentals like Airbnb, a coalition of neighborhood associations is complaining that the newly-legit room renters are ignoring the requirement that they obtain city permits.

Southeast Uplift, a coalition representing 20 neighborhoods in inner Southeast Portland, sent a letter to the City Council on Oct. 14, warning that the city isn't being aggressive enough in enforcing its new rules. Those rules include notifying neighborhood associations of short-term rentals. That's a condition for getting a \$180 city permit from the Bureau of Development Services.

But Southeast Uplift says only a fraction of the people advertising rooms for rent have turned in those notifications since the city started taking permit applications in August.

"Within our twenty neighborhood footprint we see 488 residences offered for rent," Southeast Uplift chair Robert McCullough writes. "Some are consistent with the existing rules; many are not. Our coalition has received only nine applications for licenses. We find this worrisome."

The letter comes as Mayor Charlie Hales is formally proposing even more rule changes that would allow Airbnb and other short-term rentals in apartments and condos.

But the city may not have much motivation to enforce its new rules. As WW has previously reported, Portland is already collecting lodging taxes from all Airbnb rentals—regardless of whether they're operating legally.

McCullough asks City Council to revisit the rule changes it approved July 30. Southeast Uplift wants the city to fund staff to enforce its new permitting requirements, to compare annually how many short-term rentals are advertising against how many have permits, and to create penalties for renters who don't follow the rules.

"An effective enforcement program will help ensure short term rentals are offered by responsible persons," McCullough writes. "Hopefully those who comply with the City regulations will also act responsibly towards their neighbors, thereby minimizing potential negative neighborhood impacts."

The Mercury

Report: Alta Bicycle Share is No Longer a Portland Company

By Dirk VanderHart
October 24, 2014

For months now, there's been speculation Portland's Alta Bicycle Share—the company to which we've pinned our oft-dashed bike share hopes—would be moving on. Reports sprang up this summer about the company's impending acquisition by a New York real estate firm, and local officials acknowledged they'd been briefed by Alta about the change.

Now it's apparently happened, according to the website Capital New York.

A real estate company has closed on a deal to buy Alta Bicycle Share, according to two knowledgeable sources.

REQX Ventures, a company run by people affiliated with Related Companies—developer of the Time Warner Center and Hudson Yards—and its subsidiary Equinox, will own all of Alta Bicycle Share, according to one of those sources.

It will, according to that source, increase the size of the CitiBike fleet from 6,000 to 12,000.

Neither REQX, Alta, nor Mayor Bill de Blasio's administration, which was a party to the negotiations, would comment.

This might not be a surprise, but it's still relatively unclear what it means for Portland, which has been hoping in vain for a bike share system to materialize since last year (promised roll outs have been delayed twice, and there's no sign the city's got the sponsorship money needed to purchase and run a system).

Internal Portland Bureau of Transportation documents obtained by the Mercury show Mia Birk, Portland's former bike coordinator and vice president of Alta Bicycle Share, presented details about the acquisition by REQX in early August. Birk's presentation apparently touted millions in "upfront new investment" to the company once REQX held the reins, but it appears that's largely focused on New York's CitiBike system. Birk's presentation also mentioned the "building of a sales and marketing team to drive additional corporate sponsorships," which could be great, if it means someone can find Portland sponsors.

Other highlights called out, in a powerpoint presentation titled "Bike Share 2.0," and heavily redacted by PBOT for our consumption:

- A "board of directors with experience in turnaround and growth companies."
- An "augmented leadership team with deep operational, marketing, finance and technology experience."
- The promise that "REQX Ventures will commit to deliver to new cities and existing clients the next generation bicycle share system."

Seattle, which started the hunt for bike share around the same time we did and also tapped Alta, got an operational system earlier this month.