

The Oregonian

44 mayors urge Legislature to find new money for roads

By Brad Schmidt

May 11, 2015

Led by Portland's Charlie Hales, 44 mayors from across Oregon urged the Legislature on Monday to dedicate more money for road projects statewide.

In a letter, Hales and other mayors asked lawmakers to adopt a "comprehensive transportation package" before adjourning this summer.

Whether that happens is a political question.

Republicans walked out on transportation-funding talks in the Democratic-controlled Legislature. Opposition came after Gov. Kate Brown and Democrats supported a low-carbon fuel standard, which Republicans said was too costly and would make a gas-tax increase impractical.

Despite the standoff, Brown last month said she would not let lawmakers go home until they pass a funding package.

Monday's letter doesn't specify how Oregon should increase transportation revenues. But talk has focused on increasing Oregon's 30-cent-per-gallon gas tax.

"The longer we wait to act, the more expensive it will be to repair and restore our crumbling roads," the letter reads. "In the meantime, communities across Oregon will suffer from increased congestion, multiplying potholes, and decreased economic opportunity."

In a press release accompanying the letter, Hales said transportation funding "is not just a Portland issue."

But Portland has been at the front of the debate. Hales and Commissioner Steve Novick pushed a controversial street fee last year, then delayed action when they couldn't secure a third City Council vote, deferring to possible action this year by the Legislature.

In the press release, Hales' office also called attention to a weekend traffic crash on Southeast Powell Boulevard that severed the leg of a bicyclist.

In December 2013, after the death of a 70-year-old woman crossing Powell in east Portland, Hales said he would propose transferring management of state highways, such as Powell, to the city.

"We killed a 70-year-old woman on that main street this weekend with a car because it's a terrible place to walk," Hales said at the time. "ODOT owns that street. ODOT has not, as you've documented, put that street in any kind of condition to support the neighborhoods that are around it."

Now 17 months later, neither Hales nor the Portland Bureau of Transportation has taken any formal actions to secure management of Powell, Sara Hottman, a mayoral spokeswoman, said Monday.

"Nothing formal, but conversations between PBOT and the state are ongoing," she wrote in an email. "However, the focus right now for both the city and state is funding; without adequate funding on both sides, any transfer of management simply isn't feasible."

The Portland Tribune

Hales refuses to back propane terminal plan

By Jim Redden

May 12, 2015

Mayor Charlie Hales' decision to withdraw his support for the propane terminal proposed by the Pembina Pipeline Corp. has sparked some controversy.

Hales announced on Thursday that he was no longer backing the plan to build the terminal at the Port of Portland, and he urged the company to withdraw its application for a required land-use change that must be approved by the City Council. At the time, Hales said the project does not meet Portland's

environmental standards, including reducing greenhouse gas emissions caused by burning fossil fuels, like propane.

But company officials said they will ask the council for approval anyway, and Port of Portland Executive Director Bill Wyatt accused Hales of admitting he was more worried about his re-election next year, a charge denied by Hales' spokesman Dana Haynes.

Hales' decision was warmly received by environmentalists and some people living in the vicinity of the site of the proposed terminal, who had mounted a campaign to stop it based on climate change and safety concerns, but the decision was sharply criticized by the Portland Business Alliance, which said it sent a message Portland isn't open for business.

Pembina officials said the \$500 million project "would be the largest private investment in Portland's history, with over half of the cost, \$250 million, sourced locally." The terminal was projected to create 600 to 800 construction jobs while it was being built, and 30 to 40 permanent jobs when it was completed. It was also estimated to contribute about \$12 million in annual property tax revenue to local governments, including the city, the port, Multnomah County and Portland Public Schools.

The council is tentatively scheduled to take up the issue on June 10.

Port director claims politics

Pembina is based in Calgary, Alberta, Canada. It wants to build the terminal at the port to receive propane by train from Canada and then ship it to Asia. To do so, the company needs the council to change a zoning code to allow a pipeline from storage tanks to cargo ships in the Columbia River.

The request was first considered by the Planning and Sustainability Commission, where it was supported by the business community but opposed by many residents for environmental and safety reasons, including the possibility of a propane train derailment and fire. Pembina insists the proposal is safe, however.

"Pembina is confident that through the upcoming process with the city of Portland, it will gain support to move forward with next steps in the development of the project," the company said.

The commission voted 6-4 on April 7 to approve Pembina's request, but proposed charging the Canadian exporter \$6.2 million a year to offset its carbon emissions. Hales — who originally welcomed the project — withdrew his support a month later.

"I have spoken to countless Portlanders. I've studied the testimony at the Planning and Sustainability Commission. I've discussed this with colleagues inside City Hall and in the business community. I do not believe Pembina has made the case as far as Portland's environmental standards are concerned. And for that reason, I am asking Pembina to withdraw," Hales said.

Wyatt accused Hales of putting his own re-election next year ahead of other considerations, however. Hales called Wyatt last Wednesday to say he no longer supported the project. In a subsequent email to port commissioners, Wyatt said Hales told him the decision was political — that he was worried about his re-election.

"He cited concerns about the level of opposition and how that might affect his re-election as the primary concern. This is deeply disappointing, obviously, particularly because Pembina insisted on meeting with the Mayor prior to their announcement back in January," the email said.

Hales' press aide denied the accusation, however.

"I was in the room when the mayor called Bill Wyatt. I heard only the mayor's end of the conversation because it wasn't on speaker phone," Dana Haynes told the Portland Tribune. "The topic of elections never came up."

Business group blasts Hales

The Portland Business Alliance also criticized Hales' reversal.

"We are extremely disappointed that the mayor has abruptly closed the door on the Pembina propane export facility, the largest private investment ever proposed in the city of Portland," PBA President and Chief Executive Officer Sandra McDonough said. "The \$500 million investment would have received no

public subsidy and would have provided \$12 million of tax revenue annually, enough to fund the equivalent of 33 Portland police officers or firefighters, 31 teachers for Portland Public Schools, and 24 deputy sheriffs in Multnomah County.

"Though the city claims a strong equity agenda, today's action doesn't support that value," she continued. "This project was projected to create 40 jobs directly in the North Portland facility with an average wage of \$95,000, more than double the median wage in the metro area. In addition, the project would have yielded 800 union construction jobs over two years. These are important family-wage jobs that our city needs to realize its equity goals and provide many people a path out of poverty.

"When investments like Pembina's are flatly refused, it sends a message to other companies that Portland is not open for business."

Hales admitted he struggled with the issue of the estimated 40 permanent jobs that the project would have created.

"Jobs are important to me, and to this council. In this case, Portland's booming economy is one of the factors in my decision," Hales said.

Oregon mayors plead for more state transportation funds

By Jim Redden

May 11, 2015

Mayors from 44 Oregon cities have written to legislative leaders calling for state lawmakers to pass a comprehensive transportation funding package.

"Funding basic maintenance efforts will make our roads safer, ease congestion, decrease shipping times, and create jobs. Our streets are critical infrastructure that impact our communities' ability to get children to school and products to market," reads the letter, which was sent under the name Mayors for Transportation.

You can read the full letter [here](#).

Democrats and Republicans at the 2015 Oregon Legislature are deadlocked over a new transportation funding package. Republicans want Democrats to repeal the Low Carbon Fuel Standard bill they passed on a party line vote in the opening weeks of the session before negotiations begin. Republicans say the complicated plan to reduce greenhouse gas emissions will substantially raise fuel costs with providing any new revenue for Oregon roads.

The letter says cities are already facing a shortfall of more than \$300 million a year in their street maintenance budgets, however.

"This is not just a Portland issue. This is a priority for small towns, middle-sized communities and cities; for rural, suburban and urban residents; for conservative, moderate and liberal office holders. We are all in this together," said Portland Mayor Charlie Hales.

Hales office delivered the letter to Senate President Peter Courtney, House Speaker Tina Kotek, Senate Republican Leader Ted Ferrioli, and House Republican Leader Mike McLane.

Willamette Week

Decamped

The mayor's office calls the Eastside Esplanade unsafe. Will Hales' homeless policies make a difference?

By Anthony Macuk

May 13, 2015

James Noel has seen a lot of changes in his neighborhood, which consists of a narrow sidewalk against a chain-link fence that runs along Southeast Main Street, with the northbound ramp to Interstate 84 serving as a concrete canopy.

Last year, when Noel arrived with his blue tent and its olive tarp, almost no one camped there. Now more than two dozen tents crowd the sidewalk along Main and Southeast Madison Street one block south.

As the numbers have grown, so have security concerns. Mayor Charlie Hales' office calls the area near the southern end of the Vera Katz Eastbank Esplanade unsafe.

Noel, 31 and homeless since he was 16, says police have occasionally rousted him and other campers, but now there are too many to handle.

"If they had the jail full of everyone here, they'd be in trouble," he says.

Noel and other campers may now get even more neighbors. Mayor Charlie Hales said last week he wants to move Right 2 Dream Too, the Old Town/Chinatown homeless camp, to the eastside, nine blocks south of the Main and Madison tents.

Business owners in the Central Eastside Industrial District—already upset about the increase in homeless campers—have complained about the idea.

Several campers tell WW they also aren't impressed. "It's a bad idea—too many people in a cage," says Sheri Hobbs, whose tent is near Noel's. "If we don't utilize [Right 2 Dream Too] now, why would we utilize it there?"

Since taking office in 2013, Hales has cast about for a cohesive policy on homelessness. He's tried before and failed to move Right 2 Dream Too. Hales also launched a massive sweep of homeless camps in the summer of 2013 that outraged housing advocates—an approach that City Commissioner Nick Fish called "a poor substitute for a thoughtful and compassionate policy to address homelessness."

The Portland Mercury first reported last week that Hales now wants to see a string of authorized "rest stops" for the homeless, like Right 2 Dream Too, in such areas as the Springwater Corridor.

"I'd like to see more rest stops," Hales tells WW. "We have to bear in mind that Right 2 Dream didn't work because the city created it. It worked because it was a community-led effort."

Right 2 Dream Too requires visitors to check in each night and doesn't assign permanent spaces. Hales' proposed rests stops would follow a similar model—provide resources but not permanent, individual campsites.

Supporters say business owners and the homeless should give the new location for Right 2 Dream Too a chance.

"Having Right 2 Dream in their neighborhood can be an asset, versus the idea that it can create more unrest on the street," says Israel Bayer, executive director of Street Roots, which covers issues affecting the homeless community.

The mayor's office acknowledges that the central eastside homeless camp is a growing problem.

"Right now, people are avoiding those areas because they are unsafe and scary," says Josh Alpert, Hales' director of strategic initiatives, adding, "The hope is that Right 2 Dream will bring a little more order to what is a fairly chaotic situation."

The plan hinges in part on whether Noel and other campers along Main and Madison will give Right 2 Dream Too a shot. Not many say they will.

"It's a joke," says Dyno, a camper who lives along Madison. "It was done wrong. They have too many rules. You can spend the night, but it's not a camp. Part of it is space—you don't have a space that's yours."

Local business owners have also expressed doubts about the new camp's potential to improve the situation.

"It doesn't make sense to allow camping in a place where you can't build housing," says James Camaioni, manager of Star Rentals, three blocks north of the proposed Right 2 Dream Too location. "There's already some illegal campers down living in that area.... They're just moving the problems around, and we need to come up with a solution, not just legalize the camp."

Portland Taxi Companies Aren't Changing Prices to Compete with Uber

*By Aaron Mesh
May 12, 2015*

Portland's taxis are stubbornly refusing to go wild.

Portland City Council removed price restrictions for cab companies when it legalized ride-hailing apps Uber and Lyft on April 21.

City Commissioner Steve Novick said he was responding to cab-company outcry by giving taxis a new means to compete with Uber's "surge pricing," which hikes fares during periods of high demand.

Yet three weeks into the test run, no major cab company has taken the city up on the offer to change its meter rates.

Three companies—Broadway Cab, Green Cab and Union Cab—are still mulling future price changes, says Kellian Amico, spokeswoman for a coalition of Portland taxi companies.

Radio Cab has voted to rule out that possibility.

"Customers have gotten used to what the rates are," says Radio Cab general manager Steve Entler. "We have too many repeat customers to be tinkering around with price. We're going to stay the course."

Daily Journal of Commerce

City Council to deliberate on reservoir demolitions

*By Inka Bajandas
May 11, 2015*

The Portland City Council is scheduled to decide Wednesday on whether to demolish a historic building and portions of the reservoirs in Washington Park.

Council deliberations on the topic start at 2 p.m. in City Hall, 1221 S.W. 4th Ave. At the meeting, city commissioners will decide whether to grant a Portland Water Bureau land use application for a \$76 million project to build a new underground reservoir in place of the park's existing open-air reservoirs.

With the land use application, Water Bureau officials are seeking the City Council's OK to demolish the historic Weir Building and remove portions of two existing reservoir basins to make way for the proposed Washington Park Reservoir Improvements Project. Wednesday's council meeting follows two public hearings held in March and April to gather feedback on the project and the demolition plans.

The proposed project would create a fountain consisting of a series of tiered pools and a nature area atop a planned 15-million-gallon underground drinking water reservoir in the footprint of one of the existing reservoirs. Washington Park's other reservoir would be decommissioned and a lowland habitat area and reflecting pool would replace it.

Officials announced last year that they planned to proceed with the project after receiving a mandate from the Oregon Health Authority to follow a federal regulation that outlaws the use of uncovered reservoirs to store finished drinking water. The rule is intended to reduce the risk of exposure to contaminants.

Hoffman Construction crews are scheduled to start work on the project on July 1, 2016, and wrap up in late 2020.