

## The Oregonian

### Portland explained: Why city leaders want a street fee to fix roads

By Brad Schmidt  
June 26, 2015

Portland Mayor Charlie Hales and Commissioner Steve Novick spent the better part of 2014 campaigning for new taxes or fees to pay for the city's crumbling roads. But, facing mounting opposition and declining political support, they put that effort on hiatus in early 2015.

#### How much money did Portland want?

The Portland Bureau of Transportation estimated that a street fee or tax would raise upwards of \$40 million annually to pay for maintenance and safety projects.

#### How much would I have to pay?

It depends on the option being studied.

In May, households faced a fee of about \$144 a year. In November, one option would have charged high-income married Portlanders \$900 annually. An option from December would have charged between \$36 and \$144 annually, depending on income.

Under most of the scenarios, residential charges would have accounted for about half of Portland's revenue. The other half would have come from businesses.

#### Why does Portland need the money?

City leaders have ignored a growing problem first highlighted in 1988, when the City Council set a target to spend 28 percent of utility license fees on transportation efforts. But officials didn't follow through. In 2008, then-Commissioner Sam Adams backed away from a plan to create new fees for transportation.

Hales and Novick launched their efforts in May 2014. As of December 2014, 49 percent of the city's busiest streets are in poor or very poor conditions, compared with just 33 percent in good or very good condition.

Fully 56 percent of the city's local streets are in poor or very poor condition, compared with just 25 percent in good or very good condition.

#### Why didn't a proposal go forward?

After introducing an initial plan in May 2014, Hales and Novick changed their proposal no less than five times. They faced business and residential opposition and never secured a third vote from Commissioner Amanda Fritz to pass local legislation.

Without Fritz on board, Hales and Novick in January said they would ask voters to pick an option during a May 2015 advisory vote. But one week later they cancelled that plan, with Hales saying he wanted to give the Legislature a "clean shot" to fund transportation improvements statewide during the 2015 session.

#### What did the Legislature do?

In a word, nothing.

Gov. Kate Brown and Democratic leadership couldn't push through a proposed \$343.5 million transportation plan that included a gas-tax increase. The 4-cent-per-gallon hike would have funneled only a couple million more to Portland. But Brown and Senate President Peter Courtney said it died June 25 because they couldn't reach a workable compromise that involved repealing an already-approved clean-fuels bill.

#### What comes next for Portland?

The path forward isn't clear.

Mayoral spokesman Dana Haynes said June 25 that Hales and Novick are still holding out hope that the Legislature will get "back to it as soon as possible." But Haynes didn't put a timeline for legislative action before Hales and Novick will roll out a new plan for local funding.

It's possible that transportation talks will be shelved into 2016 or beyond. Hales and Novick are seeking re-election in May 2016. And the City Council allocated about \$20 million for the city's general-fund surplus – thought to be an unprecedented amount – to help pay for transportation projects in the 2016 fiscal year.

## Portland approves Washington Park reservoir demolition

*By Brad Schmidt  
June 25, 2015*

The Portland City Council voted 5-0 Thursday to authorize the demolition of two open-air reservoirs at Washington Park to meet federal drinking-water requirements.

Officials will build an underground reservoir and add two reflective pools to mirror the popular aesthetics seen today.

In a related issue, the City Council did not act on plans to disconnect reservoirs at Mt. Tabor.

Officials will consider the issue July 15 and may craft an agreement with the Mt. Tabor neighborhood association to be considered at the meeting. It would involve a schedule for cleaning and keeping water in the reservoirs and would also outline possible improvements.

For more background on Portland reservoirs, read [The Oregonian/OregonLive's recap](#).

## Portland's Uber progress report: How ride-hailing company 'took over' city; most-served neighborhoods

*By Joseph Rose  
June 25, 2015*

The Uber experiment has reached its halfway point in Portland.

Where do things stand between City Hall and the controversial ride-hailing company whose name Commissioner Steve Novick once said reminded him of the "Third Reich"? Has the new competition from Uber and Lyft improved the city's historically unhurried and unreliable taxi service? Will ride-hailing survive the scrutiny of the city's 120-day trial period?

The Portland City Council isn't scheduled to receive an official progress report on the ride-hailing pilot until mid-July. However, we've decided to put together our own six-point review.

**1. Novick has not publicly admitted to violating Godwin's law (he says he referring to the song "Deutschlandlied," which contains "uber" in the lyrics).** But city officials say they're happy with how Uber and Lyft are -- so far -- playing by the long list of rules mandated for the 120-day pilot.

Sure, a few problems have popped up during the city's regular audits of background checks and vehicle inspections on drivers using their private cars as de facto taxis. "But they have been very responsive about fixing any issues," said Bryan Hockaday, a Novick policy advisor.

Also, city regulators have been regularly checking in on their smartphones to monitor the availability of Uber and Lyft vehicles that pick up riders with disabilities, city officials say.

Despite an initial distrust of Uber's commitment to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act, "It has been pretty encouraging," Hockaday said. "There appears to be a genuine commitment to improve transportation operations for people with disabilities."

On Thursday, two Oregonian/OregonLive checks of the Uber app showed wheelchair-accessible rides less than seven minutes away.

Meanwhile, Uber and Lyft have been forthright with sharing data detailing ridership, trip locations and other information that will help the city craft a final policy.

The city's taxi companies? Not so responsive, largely because they don't keep data in a format that is as accessible as the one used by the ride-hailing operations, Hockaday said.

A citizen for-hire transportation task force, minus recently departed disabled advocate Sue Stahl, is still meeting to revise the rules for a permanent deal.

Hockaday said the group is discussing ways for the city's taxi authorities to provide extra financial incentives to the ride-hailing companies to offer ADA-compliant rides. One idea is to charge an extra fee for every ride that would allow the city to subsidize rides for the disabled.

"We have some awesome ideas that may work and potentially serve as a national model," Hockaday said.

So, how worried should taxi companies be about ride-hailing in Portland?

City Hall is still weeding through the trial period's first data dump. The draft data report, Hockaday said, will "show any impacts to the market."

## **2. Bloomberg seems to think the city's taxi battle is over – and Uber (and its army of hired lobbyists) killed it.**

The \$50 billion startup has conquered "America's quirkiest city," according to an epic piece by Karen Weise, which (gah!) includes the obligatory nod to "Portlandia."

Still, it's an excellent piece of storytelling.

How did Uber have its way with City Hall?

"The success, says Justin Kintz, Uber's head of public policy for North America, is 'a tale as old as time—it's the power of the people.' It's also a tale about the power of backroom lobbying," writes Weise.

Lobbyists! Lobbyists! Law. A. Mercy. Lobbyists everywhere. More lobbyists than Walmart, in fact.

Over the past two years, The Oregonian/OregonLive has followed the Portland area's Uber drama – exhaustively. Still, Weise does a good job of summing up the politics, the economics, the cowardice, the courage and the expensive lobby wars waged by Uber in an effective narrative. (You might need to set aside your lunch hour to read it.)

Among other things, the piece does offer some juicy, never-reported insight into last December's unsanctioned Uber invasion -- and the negotiations between an army of local lobbyists and mayor's office that led to détente.

Of course, Uber's Oregon lobbyists are still working tirelessly in the shadows, Weise reports: *"It's nearly impossible to calculate Uber's ground war costs because many cities and states don't require the disclosure of lobbying costs. Those that do show that influencing policy doesn't come cheap."*

## **3. What Portland neighborhoods use Uber the most?**

On Wednesday, the company announced that 1,500 Portland area drivers "have partnered with Uber to provide over 100,000 safe, reliable rides to their neighbors."

During the first 60 days of Uber's legal operations in the city, most popular destinations are in the core neighborhoods. Here they are in order:

**1. Downtown**

**2. Buckman**

**3. Northwest District**

**4. Old Town Chinatown**

## 5. Lloyd District

**4. The Portland Mercury's Dirk VanderHart is looking for** Portland's "Rogue Cabbie," who apparently switched to Uber before the company banned him from using its app. The city is also looking for the foul-mouthed driver, who owes \$25,000 in fines for taking illegal fares.

**5. Remember the 1990s feature "Night Cabbie"?** Willamette Week has rebirthed the feature as "Night Uber."

A sample from the keyboard of an Uber driver who picked up a heavily tattooed woman: "I never should have got these," she said of her tattoos. "It was just dumb. I didn't know what I was doing. I only started having them done, and then I quit. Now I'm older and I think, no way am I going to go have these finished. It hurts!"

## The Portland Tribune

### Council delays Mt. Tabor reservoir vote

*By Jim Redden  
June 25, 2015*

The City Council has delayed a final decision on disconnecting the open reservoirs in Mt. Tabor until July 15.

The council was scheduled to vote on a land use permit application by the Water Bureau to disconnect the reservoirs on Thursday. But the council postponed the hearing after a joint request from the bureau and the Mt. Tabor Neighborhood Association, which have been meeting to discuss the future of the reservoirs.

The two parties have been meeting to discuss conditions on the permit recommended by the city's Historic Landmarks Commission.

"We are pleased that the Water Bureau and Mt. Tabor Neighborhood Association are close to an agreement to resolve our mutual appeals of the Historic Landmark Commission decision. We look forward to returning to Council on July 15 for a decision," says Water Bureau Administrator David Shaff.

The council did unanimously vote to demolish the open reservoirs and a support building at Washington Park, however.

The Water Bureau is responsible for providing Portlanders with safe, reliable drinking water and stewardship of natural resources. We appreciate the Portland City Council's thoughtful consideration of our application. Council's decision to approve is a step in the process that will give us the legal authority we need to decommission the open reservoirs at Washington Park, which is a step toward complying with the federal Safe Drinking Water Act. The new reservoirs will make our system more reliable, resilient and secure. Following a robust public involvement process, the design presented to Council is supported by the neighbors of Washington Park," says Shaff.

The council says both decisions are driven by a U.S. Environmental Protection Agency rules. Community activists, including many Mt. Tabor area residents, oppose the decisions, however, and are urging the council to find alternatives.

A previous Portland Tribune story can be found at [portlandtribune.com/pt/9-news/264507-137035-council-to-decide-fate-of-mount-tabor-reservoirs-on-thursday](http://portlandtribune.com/pt/9-news/264507-137035-council-to-decide-fate-of-mount-tabor-reservoirs-on-thursday).