

The Portland Tribune

Vision Zero traffic safety task force announced

*By Jim Redden
August 18, 2015*

Mayor Charlie Hales and Transportation Commissioner Steve Novick introduced the members of the new Vision Zero Safety Task Force on Monday. It is charged with developing the action plan to eliminate all traffic deaths and serious injuries, a goal the City Council has adopted.

"Today is about commitment and cooperation. We're here to announce our commitment to putting an end to fatal crashes on our roadways. We'll reach this broad goal by harnessing all of the energy and creativity of the agencies, groups and leaders represented in this room," Hales said at the press conference.

Novick noted the Vision Zero initiative has a larger goal of creating more equitable neighborhoods.

"If you live in a low-income census tract within Multnomah County you are 2.3 times more likely to be killed walking. By committing to Vision Zero goals, not only will we make Portland a safer city, we'll also make it a more equitable community for all Portlanders in all neighborhoods," Novick said.

Also at the press conference were state Senate Majority Leader Diane Rosenbaum (D-Dist. 21), state Sen. Michael Dembrow (D-Dist. 23) and Metro Councilor Bob Stacey (Dist. 6).

Hales said that as the task force develops an action plan over the next year, the city will continue to take steps to make Portland roads safer. He highlighted actions the Portland Police and the Portland Fire and Rescue will take in the coming months. They include:

Investments in pedestrian safety

PBOT will begin work on significant safety projects on three High Crash Corridors, including a new streetscape for Southeast Foster Road, and new sidewalk, crossings, and transit access improvements along 122nd and Burnside. Additionally, the Bureau will install 22 pedestrian crossing improvements in East Portland utilizing Rapid Flashing Beacons over the coming year.

Targeted enforcement of dangerous speeding

Working with the Portland Bureau of Transportation, the Portland Police will target speed enforcement and education activities on some of Portland's most dangerous roads.

New data sharing initiative

The Bureau of Fire and Rescue will work with the Transportation and Police bureaus to develop a new crash data sharing initiative. The goal is to harness the power of data to deliver more targeted safety interventions on Portland's roadways.

The members of the task force introduced Monday are: Multnomah County Circuit Court Judge Steven A. Todd; Multnomah County Environmental Health Services Director Jae P. Douglas; Oregon Department of Transportation Region 1 Policy and Development Manager Kelly Brooks; Portland Police Bureau Traffic Division Captain Kelli Sheffer; Portland Fire & Rescue Deputy Fire Chief Leo Krick; TriMet Policy & Planning Director Alan Lehto; Metro Regional Planning Manager Tom Kloster; Oregon Walks Executive Director Noel Mickelberry; Bicycle Transportation Alliance Deputy Director Stephanie Noll; AAA Director of Government & Public Affairs Marie Dodds; Oregon Trucking Association President Jana Jarvis; AARP Community Engagement Director Bandana Shrestha; Asian Pacific American Network of Oregon Associate Director Duncan Hwang; Disability Rights Oregon Attorney Anne Marie King; Elders in Action Civic Involvement Coordinator JoAnn Herrigel; Oregon AFSCME Strategic Alliances Coordinator Khanh Le; Legacy Emanuel Trauma Services R.N. and Trauma Nurses Talk Tough Coordinator Michael Morrison; TREC Research Associate Professor Chris Monsere; Safe Routes to School National Partnership / Bicycle Advisory Committee Pacific NW Regional Policy Manager/Member Kari Schlosshau; Pedestrian Advisory Committee Co-Chair Roger Averbek; Verde / Living Cully Ecodistrict Coordinator; Tony DeFalco ; OPAL Environmental Justice Oregon Deputy Director Vivian Satterfield.

PDC offers subsidized price to sell MLK site for Natural Grocers

*By Steve Law
August 18, 2015*

The Portland Development Commission will consider a deal Wednesday to sell a parcel on Northeast Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard to Majestic Realty Co., which expects to build a site for a Natural Grocers store.

The site once was eyed for a Trader Joe's, but neighborhood opposition prompted the Southern California-based retailer to back out of the deal.

Majestic, also based in Southern California, plans two buildings in the newly named MLK Alberta project, a 15,000-square-foot locale for Colorado-based Natural Grocers, and one 8,450-square-foot space, along with 90 parking spaces.

PDC proposes to sell the 1.8-acre site near MLK and Alberta Street for \$502,160, well below than its current \$2.9 million appraised value. PDC staff say the project needs a subsidized land price to pencil out.

PDC began acquiring the property in 1997, with a goal of helping revive commerce on Northeast MLK. Two earlier phases have been completed on the site, including the 36,000-square-foot Vanport Square, and 10 single-family homes.

Critics feared Trader Joe's would lead to more gentrification of the neighborhood, and the German-owned company decided to back out of the deal once it sparked controversy.

The PDC board meets at 3 p.m. Wednesday, Aug. 19, at 222 N.W. Fifth Ave.

Willamette Week

Backseat Driver

Emails show Mark Wiener bounced between advising Uber and Hales.

*By Beth Slovic
August 19, 2015*

For two decades, Mark Wiener has been the man Portland politicians turn to when they're in a jam. As the city's top political consultant, he helped Vera Katz, Randy Leonard, Sam Adams and many others get elected, then advised them when they faced trouble in office.

"Mark Wiener is the premier political consultant for City Hall candidates," says Jim Moore, a political science professor at Pacific University in Forest Grove. "Working with Wiener is the way to get elected to City Hall."

But new information continues to surface about Wiener leveraging his connections to lobby some of those same people on behalf of Uber.

WW previously reported Wiener was hired last December as a lobbyist for the ride-hailing company trying to change Portland's taxi rules.

By playing two roles—political consultant and lobbyist—Wiener wielded extraordinary clout, since he was urging rule changes to officials whom he helped get elected and was seeking to re-elect.

Mayor Charlie Hales and Commissioner Steve Novick—both Wiener clients—reversed their opposition to Uber after Wiener began representing the company. Wiener has said he did nothing wrong, because he wasn't being paid by Hales and Uber at the same time.

But newly released emails show that while Wiener lobbied for Uber, he was communicating with Hales about the mayor's political interests.

The emails show Wiener moving between representing Uber and strategizing with Hales. That dual representation raises questions about whose interests Hales and Novick's reversal on Uber served.

Observers say when political consultants lobby their clients, the public loses.

"It looks bad when someone is serving two masters and that leads to a change in policy," says Ben Gaskins, who teaches political science at Lewis & Clark College. "It's impossible to know why they changed their minds, but it could give the appearance of being inappropriate."

Professor James Thurber, director of the Center for Congressional and Presidential Studies at American University, has written about political consultants who also lobby their own clients.

"It's not illegal, but it's unethical," Thurber says. "There's an inherent conflict of interest, it's usually not transparent, and it can really distort the candidate's position if it results in pushing a special interest over the public's interest."

Hales says there's no conflict.

"Mark Wiener has never lobbied me on this or any issue," Hales says. "And while I have not hired him to help me on my re-election campaign, he, like many others, gives me advice, of which I'm free to take or not. He has not been compensated by me or my campaign committee since I have been mayor."

Wiener also makes a distinction between advising Hales and getting paid by Hales.

"At no time during my engagement with Uber have I been paid by or in a contract with Mayor Hales," Wiener says.

Wiener undertook his representation of Uber at a crucial time for the California-based company—and for Hales.

Uber was facing a hostile reception in Portland last December. Portland was the only major city on the West Coast where Uber wasn't operating.

Hales was preparing for a re-election bid, and he needed to shore up flagging support.

On Nov. 25, 2014, Hales wrote to Wiener, who was on a cruise, under the subject line "ahoy!"

"I want to get onto your dance card in two ways upon your return," Hales wrote. "Once for the two of us to meet, and the other for that strategy session that I have tentatively set for the evening of December 29th."

Wiener wrote back about 90 minutes later. "Let me know when you want to do the 2 of us—12/29 is fine," he said.

Hales, who lives near Wiener in Eastmoreland, responded with a breakfast invitation for Dec. 10.

On Dec. 5, Uber crashed into Portland, launching its service illegally.

Eight days later, as WW has previously reported, Wiener hosted a peace gathering in his dining room between Uber managers, Hales and Novick. The two sides agreed that Portland would review its taxi rules if Uber backed out of the city temporarily.

On Dec. 17, emails between Wiener, an Uber policy adviser and one of Hales' top staffers show the trio preparing to make a formal announcement of the deal. Josh Alpert, a Hales aide, wrote to Wiener and Caitlin O'Neill of Uber that day about a draft news release.

"Mark and I talked a few minutes ago about media, etc., so I think we'll all be on the same page once we figure out timing," Alpert wrote.

Wiener chimed in 18 minutes later. "This looks good to me," he wrote. "I'll leave it to you two to solidify the tick tock of the media strategy; what Josh outlined to me on the phone seemed right."

Two days later, Wiener signed a contract with Uber. He has declined to say how much he's being paid for what he calls "strategic advice."

Alpert continued to email Wiener about Uber, sending him a list Jan. 5 of Portlanders who'd been appointed to serve on the mayor's task force on taxi rules, and a draft agenda Jan. 9 for the task force's first meeting.

Then, Wiener turned to Hales' re-election bid.

On Feb. 25, Wiener responded to an email message from Hales' pollster in Oakland, copying the mayor, his then-chief of staff Gail Shibley and Alpert. "Adding Team Hales," he wrote. "We should think about how to distinguish the difference to voters between issues that are 'important' and mission critical."

In April, Hales, Novick and City Commissioner Dan Saltzman, also a Wiener client, voted to legalize Uber and its competitor Lyft, over the objections of local cab companies.

Broadway Cab president Raye Miles says Wiener's close relationship to both Hales and Uber helped give the company what it wanted.

"The whole landscape changed over the course of a weekend last December," Miles says. "It just went 180 degrees. [Wiener's] ability to sway at least some city commissioners is obvious."

The Portland Mercury

Commissioner Steve Novick Is Considering Paying Cab Companies For Their Wheelchair Vans

*By Dirk VanderHart
August 19, 2015*

Portland's taxi industry has seen sweeping shifts since Portland City Council allowed Uber and Lyft into the city in late April. Now Transportation Commissioner Steve Novick is mulling a few more.

As Portland City Council gets ready to mull permanent rule changes, Novick sent a letter [pdf] to the city's cab outfits and transportation network companies (TNCs) on April 13, laying out possibilities for further changes.

Among the most intriguing: Novick says he'd consider paying the city's cab companies for the expensive wheelchair-accessible vehicles (WAVs) they acquired in the chaotic run-up to the Uber era.

"I am interested in the concept of somehow offering compensation from the City to those companies that made recent WAV investments," Novick wrote in the letter. "I ask the taxi companies to provide documentation of such recent expenditures."

The WAV issue is one of many raw deals cab companies say they've gotten in this whole process (TNCs have already snatched much of the market). Roughly two months before city council approved a 120-day pilot period that let Uber and Lyft in, the city's taxi board bucked years of tight regulation by allowing hundreds of new cabs onto city streets.

With those permissions came a requirement: That companies would ensure 20 percent of their fleets could accommodate wheelchairs. That percentage was already city policy, but it was frequently ignored. The city made clear it wouldn't issue permits for normal cabs until companies bolstered their wheelchair-accessible fleets.

And the cab companies complied, but just two months later it didn't matter. During the pilot project that's getting ready to wrap up, officials elected to do away with the whole 20 percent requirement altogether. They've instead gravitated toward performance benchmarks that ensure people in wheelchairs don't get vastly slower service than other customers. It's likely those benchmarks will be part of permanent regulations going forward.

Cab companies want to hear more about Novick's proposal to pay them back. Broadway Cab president Raye Miles, in a response to the commissioner's letter, wrote she wasn't prepared to show the city her expenses but is "interested in seeing a definitive plan for a city subsidy." Radio Cab General Manager Steve Entler said he'd be happy to provide documentation.

Novick, meanwhile, isn't divulging much. "I've got a couple of ideas of how it might work, but I want to get a better handle on the taxis' recent expenditures before broadcasting them," he tells the Mercury.

One big question: Where the money for the subsidies would come from. The Portland Bureau of Transportation reaped huge rewards in this year's budget discussions—pulling down more than \$20 million in general fund money to help bolster its inadequate revenues—but much of that's money's been promised to various maintenance projects.

Meanwhile, a task-force looking at taxi rules has recommended tacking on a small fee to taxi and TNC rides that would subsidize wheelchair accessible service in town. It's unclear if that money could have a role in Novick's notion.

Reimbursing cab companies isn't the only idea Novick has brought up. He also wrote he'd be willing to allow cabs to offer stepped-down insurance coverage for drivers who aren't carrying a passenger or on their way to picking one up—similar to the controversial arrangement Uber and Lyft have concocted.

Representatives from Broadway and Radio Cab responded, as usual, by repudiating those phased-in insurance plans.

Novick also asked TNCs if they'd want the right to pick up passengers who hail them on the street—something currently illegal for Uber and Lyft drivers—in exchange for agreeing to accept cash payments, install cameras, and paint their vehicles.

Lastly, Novick solicited ideas for new protections for TNC and cab drivers, a request that was met with derision by cabbies. Broadway Cab President Miles responded to Novick that she found it “more than passing strange that this concern for drivers’ economic wellbeing arrives after the deregulation experiment has already severely damaged the economic welfare of most branded taxi drivers.”

Radio Cab Manager Entler piled on. "I also concur with Raye's assessment of whether or not you are genuinely concerned with driver's welfare," he wrote.

Portland Business Journal

Portland officials pull trigger on \$3M diversity startup fund

*By Malia Spencer
August 19, 2015*

The Portland Development Commission is launching a \$3 million seed fund aimed at women and underrepresented minority entrepreneurs.

The Inclusive Startup Fund already has \$1.25 million committed to it. The city of Portland and Multnomah County each kicked in \$500,000 while the state of Oregon ponied up \$250,000.

The fund aims to back startups across all industries, as opposed to tech companies only. PDC expects the fund to begin investing by summer 2016.

PDC officials are seeking a fund manager who'll raise the remaining \$1.75 million and operate the fund, which the city first revealed in May.

The PDC has lately sought to diversify the Portland startup community. This fund could augment such other work as the Startup PDX Challenge, an accelerator for diverse founders and the Portland Tech Diversity Pledge.

Startups comprise a critical component of the region’s economy. Some 90 percent of all firms in the state employ fewer than 20 people.

However, as the Portland startup community evolves and more resources become available, the PDC team uncovered an important gap.

“The current startup ecosystem greatly favors white, male founders and the availability of startup capital is disproportionately weighted to startups with white, male founders,” said PDC Executive Director Patrick Quinton.

According to PDC research, 96 percent of Portland's 114 venture capital deals in the last two years involved companies founded by or led by at least one white male. For women, the rate was 19 percent while Asian and East Indian groups posted a 10 percent rate.

The figure drops to 2 percent for Native Americans and 1 percent for Latino residents.

“For a fund to be successful, it has to make (diversity) its sole purpose,” Quinton said.

The Inclusive Startup Fund is not the PDC’s first foray into investing. The group helped launch the Portland Seed Fund in 2010, selecting Co-Managing Directors Jim Huston and Angela Jackson to run it.

Candidates have until 3 p.m. Sept. 18 to submit their proposals. PDC, which will also grant at least \$50,000 for the fund’s initial operations, will select the managers by mid-October.