

The Oregonian

Ted Wheeler: 'I'm running for mayor of Portland'

By Brad Schmidt
September 9, 2015

Oregon Treasurer Ted Wheeler is ending six months of speculation Wednesday by formally announcing he will challenge incumbent Charlie Hales in Portland's 2016 mayoral race.

Wheeler's decision launches what should be an extremely competitive campaign between two of the most accomplished names to square off for Portland mayor in two decades.

A one-time gubernatorial hopeful, Wheeler this summer decided not to challenge Gov. Kate Brown. Instead, he'll face Hales in what early polling suggests is a dead heat.

As is Portland's polite political way, viable candidates rarely challenge incumbents. But Wheeler, who launched his political career a decade ago by defeating a weak incumbent on the Multnomah County Board of Commissioners, said in an interview that he believes Portland needs better leadership.

"My fight isn't with Charlie Hales," Wheeler told The Oregonian/OregonLive on Tuesday. "My fight is with the problems he has failed to address as mayor."

Hales has known for months that Wheeler was considering a mayoral bid, setting the stage for Portland's highest-profile race since House Speaker Vera Katz defeated city Commissioner Earl Blumenauer for mayor in 1992.

"I'm ready for anything," Hales said Aug. 20 after meeting Wheeler for coffee.

Wheeler's announcement also potentially opens the door for a third candidate – someone who, unlike Hales and Wheeler, isn't a white middle-age man formerly registered as a Republican – to jump into the race.

"Something like that could happen – depending on what else is happening on the May ballot," said Jim Moore, director of the Tom McCall Center for Policy Innovation at Pacific University.

A protracted Democratic presidential primary between Hillary Clinton and Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders, for instance, "would bring out a progressive bloc of voters who would go exactly for that kind of candidate."

Wheeler, 53, is a sixth-generation Oregonian and a scion to timber money, with the coast town of Wheeler named after his grandfather. The younger Wheeler earned bachelor's and master's degrees from Stanford, Columbia and Harvard, then went to work managing investments and advising small businesses.

Wheeler wrote a 1993 book, "Government that Works: Innovation in State and Local Government." In 2006, he launched his government career, trouncing Multnomah County Chairwoman Diane Linn to end the county's dysfunctional "Mean Girls" era.

In 2010, Gov. Ted Kulongoski appointed Wheeler treasurer after Ben Westlund died of cancer. Wheeler went on to win election to Oregon's third-highest statewide office but now finds himself term-limited at the end of 2016.

Until February, Wheeler had been considered a sure bet to run for governor in the 2018 Democratic primary. But John Kitzhaber's resignation elevated Brown, the secretary of state, giving her the incumbency.

Wheeler acknowledged his political plans changed but said he is "highly motivated" to run for Portland mayor.

"It was an easy decision," said Wheeler, who plans a formal campaign kickoff Wednesday at 10 a.m. at Revolution Hall in Southeast Portland. "Portland needs a mayor who is going to take on the significant issues this city is facing."

Wheeler lists his top priorities as addressing homelessness, economic prosperity and government transparency.

Wheeler said the city needs an "all hands on deck approach" to help 2,000 people get and stay off the streets, with improved access to counseling and transitional housing.

Wheeler said he supports increasing the minimum wage and would work with schools and labor groups to "skill people up" for decent-paying jobs.

He derided Portland government for making too many decisions "in secret, behind closed doors." He pointed to Uber's hiring of campaign consultant Mark Wiener – who advised Hales during his 2012 mayoral race – to lobby Hales and Commissioner Steve Novick on welcoming the company. Neither Hales nor Novick listed a key Uber meeting at Wiener's house on lobbying reports.

If elected, Wheeler said he'll do "whatever it takes" to prohibit campaign consultants from lobbying clients on policies.

Wheeler didn't offer a solution for Hales' biggest challenge: fixing Portland's crumbling roads. But unlike Hales, he promised that any funding proposal "will go before the voters for their approval."

During nearly nine years in office, Wheeler has built a reputation as a pragmatic executive who challenges the status quo when the politics are on his side.

Early in his county term, Wheeler bested then-Sheriff Bernie Giusto over jail spending. In 2009 he sparred with then-city Commissioner Randy Leonard over urban renewal funding, quipping, "I'm new in the job, but I wasn't born yesterday."

As treasurer, Wheeler worked, albeit reluctantly, to rein in perks for the state's investment managers. He was also an early proponent of reforming the state's public retirement system.

In his boldest move, he challenged financial projections for a new Interstate 5 bridge when most Democrats were promoting it. And this session, the Legislature adopted a state retirement plan he championed for private-sector workers whose employers don't offer one.

Wheeler has also had his share of losses.

He never opened Multnomah County's Wapato Jail, despite pledges he would. As treasurer, he tried but failed to restructure oversight of state investments. And voters overwhelmingly rejected his 2014 plan to take on state debt to finance college scholarships.

Now Wheeler faces his biggest political challenge to date.

No Portland City Council incumbent has lost a re-election bid since 1992. No mayor has been unseated since 1984, when barkeep Bud Clark defeated Frank Ivancie, although only Clark and Katz pursued multiple terms.

While Hales has ruffled feathers since taking office in 2013 – the controversial street-funding debate, yanking support for the proposed Pembina propane facility – he hasn't been severely weakened.

Hales reported more than \$108,000 in campaign contributions through August, though that may not prove much of a head start. Wheeler and his wife, who live in a \$1.3 million home, spent about \$320,000 of their own money in Wheeler's previous races, according to state records.

Non-campaign polling from early May showed voter support split at the prospect of a Hales/Wheeler mayoral race, according to results reviewed by The Oregonian/OregonLive. Hales held a 3-point edge – 31 percent to 28 percent, well within the margin of error – while 41 percent of voters said they were undecided.

Wheeler said he expects a spirited campaign and, despite holding statewide office, considers himself the underdog.

"It will be a tough race," he said, "and it will be a competitive race."

A gas tax to fix roads? City Club report says Portland needs it

*By Brad Schmidt
September 9, 2015*

The Portland City Council should ask voters to approve a gas tax to help repair rundown roads, according to a new report from the City Club of Portland.

And that gas-tax proposal should head to voters as soon as possible, not after the 2016 election season, the report recommends.

But even then, city officials wouldn't have enough money to fix the growing maintenance backlog and should consider an array of new taxes or fees, a City Club research committee concluded.

The new report, publicly released Wednesday, refocuses attention on Portland's crumbling streets even as Mayor Charlie Hales hoped to defer the controversial topic until after his re-election bid. It also comes as Commissioner Steve Novick, who oversees city transportation, is mulling a gas tax.

A gas tax must be referred to city voters. Novick on Tuesday said in a text message that 10 cents a gallon would raise about \$58 million over four years – far less than what Hales and Novick hoped to raise during their ill-fated 2014 street-fee campaign.

Novick said he's a "long way from saying, 'that's the plan,' but I've been trying to explore every plausible option." Novick has discussed the gas-tax concept with several key outside groups, including the Portland Business Alliance.

The City Club, Portland's well-heeled civic organization, is scheduled to discuss the issue and vote on the report Friday. The research committee voted 5-4 in support of the gas tax recommendation.

The minority also endorsed the gas tax. But in addition, it urged the City Council to implement a "modest" transportation utility fee – similar to the one proposed in 2014 – that would be charged to all city households and businesses.

5 things to know about bike share

By Elloit Njus

September 9, 2015

Bike share is closer than ever to its Portland debut. City transportation officials will announce Wednesday a plan to launch a bike rental system without a private-sector sponsor, the search for which led to years of delays.

Here are five things to know about the nation's bike sharing movement.

Bike share has a remarkable safety record

Reuters reported last year that not one fatality had been linked to a municipal bike share program in the seven years they'd been around. (That record appears to remain intact.)

How? The bikes are slow, heavy, and they're hard to miss in traffic. They feature built-in lights and reliable drum brakes.

However, the American Journal of Public Health reported that cities with bike share programs see more head injuries than those without. Which brings us to...

Bike share users tend not to wear helmets

When users hop on a bike share bicycle, they tend not to strap on a helmet, according to a study in *Annals of Emergency Medicine*.

Observing cyclists in Boston and Washington, D.C., the researchers found that 80 percent of bike share riders were unhelmeted, compared to 49 percent of other riders. It makes some sense — tourists likely aren't going to pack a helmet, and a local running a quick errand after work probably didn't bring one from home.

Portland transportation officials hope to address this through helmet promotions and explore helmet vending near bike share hubs.

Bike share can increase cycling overall, and it's good for the health and convenience of users

There's limited study of bike share, a relatively new phenomenon. But what's out there says it can help push cycling into the mainstream.

Miriam Ricci, a research fellow at the at the University of the West of England, reviewed existing studies for an article in the journal *Research in Transportation Business & Management*. She found that bike share programs result in more bicycle uses generally, and some bike share users increase their use of personal bikes and decrease their use of cars.

Portland's Climate Action Plan calls for the share of people commuting by bike in Multnomah County to quintuple by 2030, from 5 percent to 25 percent. That's a pretty lofty goal, but a bike share program could provide a boost.

More bicycle use suggests health benefits, Ricci writes, assuming it's not replacing other physical activity (and evidence suggests it might frequently replace a brisk walk). Her review also shows economic benefits near bike-share stations and that users find bike share convenient and time-saving.

Those benefits aren't shared by everyone

Ricci also found the users of bike share tend to be mostly young, white, well-paid men, so these benefits aren't equally spread around.

Portland says it's addressing equity issues by offering a low rate for bike rentals — the lowest in the country, the transportation bureau says. Its contract, which it has not yet released to The Oregonian/OregonLive, will also require the operator to "hire Portlanders at a living wage from underserved populations" and to expand into low-income areas.

The operator, Motivate Co., will also provide 500 free memberships through community organizations that serve low-income people, and the city is looking into cash-only payment options.

There's no evidence bike share reduces congestion or pollution

Ricci's review found that bike share is no panacea for urban congestion, or even reduced carbon dioxide emissions.

In practice, bike sharing tends to be a replacement for walking or using public transportation, so there's little impact on traffic.

In fact, bike share operators spend a lot of time using cars to "redistribute" bikes in an effort to keep the bikes from piling up in areas where they don't get much use. As a result, emissions can actually increase.

Social Bicycles, the supplier of the bikes to be used in Portland's fleet, says it will use the data it collects from GPS tracking and financial incentives to try and cut down on redistribution needs and plot efficient routes.

Update: Commenter mattpennington points out a new study that suggests bike share might alleviate congestion, though it might also increase congestion in neighborhoods nearby.

Investigator handling complaints against Portland police found to have been discourteous to union president

*By Maxine Bernstein
September 8, 2015*

A city inquiry found that an investigator from Portland's police oversight division violated policy with conduct unbecoming a city employee through his discourteous treatment of the police union president.

The complaint stemmed from a September 2014 encounter that the investigator had with Officer Daryl Turner, who heads the Portland Police Association.

Turner, who was sitting with another officer being interviewed by the Independent Police Review Division investigator, objected to one of the questions. He complained that the investigator then "physically threatened" him, according to a letter he sent to the city auditor.

The interview was halted briefly, and as Turner was leaving the interview room, he complained that the investigator stood up to his face, ranting and yelling at him that he had no right to challenge his questions.

"In all my time serving as a PPA representative, including representing members in incredibly sensitive investigations, no investigator has ever physically threatened me," Turner wrote to the auditor on Aug. 25. "Rather than meeting this unprofessional conduct by the IPR investigator with an unprofessional response, I asked the city's Bureau of Human Resources to investigate."

He also had complained that the investigator harassed and discriminated against him and exhibited unprofessional conduct.

The city auditor in May released an April 13 memo from the city's Bureau of Human Resources, showing that human resource officials didn't substantiate Turner's complaints about harassment or discrimination.

But the auditor never divulged that one complaint actually was upheld against the investigator.

On May 22, Anna Kanwit, director of the Human Resources Bureau, sent a memo to each party, clarifying that the bureau did find that the investigator engaged in conduct unbecoming a city employee through his "discourteous treatment" of Turner.

City Auditor Mary Hull Caballero said Tuesday that there was some haziness surrounding the city's findings, which led to the May 22 clarifying memo.

"You can see there was confusion around what was alleged, what was investigated and what was confirmed," Hull Caballero said.

Asked if she knew about the discourteous finding when she told The Oregonian in early May that the police oversight investigator was vindicated by the city's investigation, Hull Caballero declined to answer.

"I cannot discuss that part of it because it's part of attorney-client privilege," she said.

She would not say if the investigator faced any discipline, but confirmed that the investigator has continued in his role. Her office oversees the Independent Police Review Division.

In July, the auditor said she had the city attorney's office provide training to all the investigators in the city's Independent Police Review Division on their roles during interviews of police officers.

Portland created the Independent Police Review Division in 2001 to accept complaints against police and recommend policy changes. The City Council gave the division power to conduct its own investigations last year. The Portland Police Association strongly opposed the division's increased powers.

Hull Caballero said she asked for additional training for the independent investigators in light of what she and the former city auditor consider a pattern of intimidating behavior by police union leaders.

"Everybody has a role to play. It's important to know where the lines are, and how best to object when those lines are crossed," she said. "We just won't tolerate interference in that process."

"The police union representatives are not to act as lawyers or counsel the officer being questioned or run interference with questions," the auditor said.

If a union official interferes with a line of questioning by the police oversight investigator, the investigators have been instructed to put their objections in writing, contact the city attorney's office, or if all else fails, end the interview and resume at a future time.

In his Aug. 25 letter to the auditor that he copied to the mayor and city commissioners, Turner argued that Hull Caballero misled the public about the city's findings.

"Your office is unwilling to hold its own employees accountable, even though your office is founded on accountability," Turner wrote. Turner declined any comment about the investigation, its findings or his letter.

Hull Caballero did not respond directly to Turner's allegation, but said she's disturbed that the city never investigated an earlier complaint that Turner intimidated another police oversight investigator in June 2014. At the time, Kanwit determined that the city couldn't investigate Turner because he holds an unusual position as a union employee, or city employee on loan to the union.

"One party given a pass creates a difficult situation for our employees," the auditor said.

Portland City Council set to OK inequitable transit perk - again: Editorial Agenda 2015

*By The Oregonian Editorial Board
September 8, 2015*

On Wednesday, Portland City Council will consider an ordinance whose passage would reaffirm – again – the need for adult leadership in City Hall. The measure would extend for another school year the Youth Pass transit program, a holdover from the tenure of Mayor Sam Adams built on the flimsy foundation of the Business Energy Tax Credit (BETC) – aka everyone's favorite slush fund. When the BETC went bust, Portland City Council volunteered city taxpayers to pick up the slack. It's been volunteering them ever since. On Wednesday, Council is preparing to dedicate an additional \$966,666 to the cause.

The program provides transit passes covering TriMet routes and the Portland Streetcar for all Portland Public Schools students in grades nine through 12. The district does not provide traditional yellow bus service to high schoolers who live too far away to walk, as other districts do. Instead, public transportation does the job. The district used to buy TriMet passes for low-income students, and others took advantage of deep discounts.

Then, several years ago, the service was super-charged using state funds hoovered up through the notorious BETC program. Every Portland Public Schools high schooler thus received a so-called Youth Pass regardless of his or her need or proximity to school. Ain't "free" money great?

When the Legislature finally turned off the BETC taps in 2011, TriMet and Portland City Council helped keep the Youth Pass going, but both parties have consistently expressed reservations. In an April 2, 2013, letter to Superintendent Carole Smith, TriMet General Manager Neil McFarlane noted that "board members, community stakeholders and jurisdictional partners from across the region" had expressed equity concerns. They had – and have - good reason to. Even though TriMet taxes employers throughout its service area, Youth Passes are distributed only to students in Portland Public Schools. That same inequity affects the families in Portland whose children attend private schools or schools in other districts. City Council has been spending money on free passes that are not equally available to the children of all city taxpayers.

In its annual bail-out ritual, Portland at least has the presence of mind to say, in effect, "there must be a better way." Wednesday's ordinance thus features a commitment to form a work group "to seek and develop sustainable funding sources for future extensions" of the transit pass program. It also points to a funding source of choice: the Legislature, which sensibly declined this session to approve a bill that would have off-loaded the cost of the Youth Pass to taxpayers across the state. Why should people in Hood River or Ontario pay for a perk available only to a select group of urban kids?

The Youth Pass is just that: a perk, and the full cost of offering it should be borne by Portland Public Schools, whose students – and no one else's – benefit. If the district doesn't consider the Youth Pass valuable enough to support without other people's money, the program should expire. There's little doubt that it would without continuing support from TriMet and the city of Portland.

Why, then, does Portland City Council regularly, if somewhat reluctantly, spend money on behalf of another government entity to provide an unnecessary perk that treats its own taxpayers inequitably? Momentum. Even if the arguments for doing so are compelling, it's difficult to end support for popular programs whose beneficiaries will be angry. Thus, Portland City Council, year after year, spends money that could be used to fill potholes on free transit passes. And that's why it will do so next year, the year after that and every subsequent year until Council contains a majority of people with the courage to say "no."

You know, adults.

Portland's troubling dearth of public-sector project managers (OPINION)

*By Guest Columnist John Russell
September 8, 2015*

Over the 40 years that I've served as a volunteer for the mayors of Portland, from Neil Goldschmidt on, I've noticed a powerfully important but largely unnoticed change: the slow but seemingly inexorable decline in the public sector's supply of competent project managers.

The recent obituary for Vic Rhodes and the upcoming opening of the Tilikum Crossing brought the change to mind. Vic is the person about whom Charlie Hales said, "There would be no streetcar, no aerial tram, no Eastbank Esplanade, if there had been no Vic Rhodes."

Vic worked for the Portland Bureau of Transportation. Project managers are the folks who take a vision and make it a reality. It's tedious, unheralded work that demands the attributes of a bulldog: grab hold and don't let go, for as long as it takes. Vic, for example, convinced Union Pacific, the owner of the Steel Bridge and the company whose reputation is to say "no" to any request, to allow pedestrians and bicyclists to use the bridge! Lots of discouraging trips to Omaha were required.

As an example, to get to the point that a project as magnificent as the Tilikum Crossing bridge is operational, the starting point is the statement of the problems to be solved. The rest is up to the project managers. One of the most talented project managers of the last several decades, Tuck Wilson, spearheaded the acquisition of the right of way from Union Pacific, reached agreement on the height of the bridge from last-minute holdouts, rearranged the land ownership around the Oregon Museum of Science and Industry to permit the line, among many other seemingly insoluble problems. (Wilson was the project manager for the Justice Center, the Oregon Convention Center, Columbia Villa and west side light rail.)

But Wilson has retired, and Vic Rhodes has passed. The Portland Development Commission used to have a stable of talented project managers, like Robert Holmes, Chris Kopka, Carter MacNichol, Bruce Allen and Abe Farkas, but they've gone on to the private sector and haven't been adequately replaced. The mayor's office under Neil Goldschmidt had an equally talented group, folks like Angus Duncan, David Yaden, Alan Webber, Doug Wright and others. In my opinion, in PDC, PBOT and the mayor's office the project manager roles have been largely replaced by policy people who are adept at dealing with budgets and the ongoing policy issues facing City Council, but who don't have the talent and the experience to make visions realities.

Who are the bulldogs who will shepherd the James Beard Public Market? Who will solve the Environmental Protection Agency's Rubik's Cube of the north reach of the Willamette River? Who will help make the "there/there" of neighborhoods east of Interstate 205? Who will help solve the problem of Interstate 5 on the surface of the Central Eastside?

There's a saying going around: "What will we do when we run out of Neil Goldschmidt's ideas?"

Maybe the more difficult question is: "If we had new ideas, visions and solutions, who would carry them out?"

The Portland Tribune

Ted Wheeler to run for Portland mayor

By Jim Redden

September 9, 2015

Ending months of speculation in political circles, State Treasurer Ted Wheeler will announce he is running for Portland mayor on Wednesday.

Wheeler will make the announcement at a morning press conference at Revolution Hall, the new name of the former Washington High School in Southeast Portland.

In his prepared statement, Wheeler declares himself to be a progressive politician who wants to lead a progressive city that is falling short of its ideals.

“I’m running for mayor because I don’t believe we can be a progressive city unless we’re making real progress for the people who need our help the most,” Wheeler says.

Mayor Charlie Hales has already announced he is running for reelection in 2016. He has already raised over \$109,000 so far this year.

“I know this will be a fight. But my fight isn’t with Charlie Hales. My fight is with the problems he failed to address,” Wheeler says, listing some of the problems as chronic homelessness, unmet mental health needs, and a lack of economic opportunities.

Although Wheeler says his fight is not with Hales, he takes a not-so-veiled shot at the mayor in his remarks, alluding to Hales' unannounced meeting with an Uber lobbyist at the home of political consultant Mark Wiener, who subsequently went to work for the ride-hailing company.

“And you can’t say you are accountable as an accountable leader when too much of the city’s business is being conducted behind closed doors, in secret, accessible only to the well-connected and highly paid corporate lobbyists,” Wheeler said.

Wheeler’s announcement sets up a 2016 Primary Election race between two Portlanders with years of local and elected experience.

Wheeler is a successful businessman who was involved in homeless issues before being elected Multnomah County chair in 2006. He was appointed state treasurer on March 11, 2010, to fill the unexpired term of Ben Westlund, who died in office. Wheeler was elected to the remainder of the term on Nov. 2, 2010, then elected to a full four-year term in 2012. He cannot run for the office again because of term limits in the Oregon Constitution.

Hales was vice president for the Home Builders Association of Metropolitan Portland before serving on the City Council from 1993 to 2002. Among other things, he oversaw the Bureau of Planning during a comprehensive zoning review and became an outspoken and effective mass transit advocate. Hales resigned to work for HDR Inc., an engineering firm, where he managed the planning of new streetcar lines in cities. He ran for Portland mayor in 2012, defeating progressive activist Jefferson Smith in the General Election.

City Club report calls for gas tax, other new fees to fix streets

By Jim Redden

September 9, 2015

The City Council should ask Portland voters to approve a local gas tax to help fund street maintenance and safety projects, according to a City Club of Portland report released Wednesday morning.

The report by a member-volunteers Street Fee Research Committee also says the council should immediately devote more existing revenue to the streets, and implement other fees to

raise funds for them, including a commuter payroll tax on out-of-state workers, and new parking permits and fees.

And, the report says, the city should lobby the Oregon Legislature for authority to charge a weight-and-value-based vehicle registration fee and pursue a "vehicle miles traveled" (VMT) fee, too.

"There is no silver bullet. No single source of revenue will solve Portland's transportation funding problem. An immediate infusion of cash from the current budget surplus and general fund will stave off some deterioration; a city gas tax could cover the bulk of routine maintenance costs; and commuter payroll taxes and parking permits and fees could provide a small amount of additional revenue," reads the report, which will be presented to the longstanding civic organization for consideration and a vote at its weekly Friday lunch forum.

The study committee found many miles of Portland's streets have fallen into disrepair and now need at least \$50 million per year to keep them from getting any worse, at least \$75 million per year to repair them, and at least \$80 million per year to repair and construct safety projects that benefit all modes of transportation — for a total of \$205 million per year.

Mayor Charlie Hales and Transportation Commission Steve Novick have proposed a variety of different street fees over the past few years, but, accruing to their report, none of them won enough support to pass.

Novick has been calling business and community leaders in recent weeks seeking their ideas for new street funding sources. Novick says he will not present anything new to the council unless it has a constituency willing to support it in the community.

In response to the report, Novick sent the Portland Tribune the following email:

"I am very impressed and pleased by the City Club research report, and will be interested to see how it is received by Club members. Three quick points:

"It is critically important that a credible, independent group like the City Club has concluded that we really do need additional revenue. Some people assume that we could pay to fix the streets if we just cut our spending on 'other unimportant stuff.' The City Club report explains that there just isn't much 'other unimportant stuff' to cut. Specifically, the report notes that the city spends the vast majority of its discretionary funds on police, fire, parks and housing.

"I am pleased that the report argues for quick action. I never thought we should sweep this issue under the rug for a few years - as previous City Councils have done. But I also knew that I couldn't get anything done by myself. If the members of the City Club join the effort, the odds of getting something done sooner rather than later go way up.

"Finally, as to the specific majority report recommendation of a gas tax, it will be interesting to see if the whole City Club adopts that recommendation. I have said I won't propose a new plan unless it has strong support outside City Hall. If the City Club endorsed a gas tax, that will be a big step toward giving that option the support it would need to be viable."

The study committee members included: Jennifer Rollins (chair), Kristin Eberhard (lead writer), Brian Landoe (vice chair), Ted Wall, Drusilla van Hengel, Barbara Slaughter, Andy Shaw, Spencer Ehrman and Alan Brickley. The committee's research advisers were Byron Palmer and Ryan Fox-Lee. The advocacy and awareness adviser was Jen Scott.

The report can be read at www.pdxcityclub.org/streetfee.

Hales appoints committee to advise on residential infill issues

By Jim Redden

September 9, 2015

Keeping a promise to Portlanders concerned about the growing number of residential demolition and infill projects, Mayor Charlie Hales has appointed a 25-member Stakeholder Advisory Committee to help ensure that new or remodeled houses are more consistent with surrounding homes in their neighborhoods.

The committee is a response to one of several controversies about how Portland is changing to accommodate hundreds of thousands of people projected to move here in coming years. It was prompted by complaints about new homes being built to replace houses that are demolished. Lawn signs protesting demolitions and even the design of new buildings are popping up in neighborhoods around town.

Critics say the new homes frequently do not fit into their surroundings, because they are either skinnier or far larger than the ones they replace. Homebuilders, however, say they are responding to market demands, including city policies encouraging so-called skinny homes.

“There are many facets to the issue of preserving and enhancing Portland’s unique neighborhoods,” Hales said when he announced the committee last week. According to the announcement, the task force will focus on three primary topics: scale of houses, narrow lot development, and alternative housing options.

Member Sarah Cantine is hopeful the committee can help resolve conflicts over the design and scale of residential infill projects. She serves on the land-use committee of the Boise Neighborhood Association, which developed its own voluntary design guidelines to help mixed-use buildings fit into the neighborhood.

“Not every developer has followed them, but those who have say they appreciate knowing what the neighborhood wants. I think we can develop the same kind of guidelines for residential infill projects,” says Cantine, an architecture and planning professional at Scott Edwards Architecture.

Another task force member, Douglas McLeod, says he hopes the committee will address such issues as affordability. He says home prices are being pushed up by the lack of easily available building sites, and he worries new regulations could increase costs even more.

“Home prices have increased 41 percent in the past year and a half, and the city needs to be talking about that,” says McLeod, a real estate agent and member of the Home Builders Association of Metropolitan Portland.

Members of the committee will bring a wide range of viewpoints to the infill issue. The task force, for example, includes representatives of two organizations that are frequently at odds on land-use matters — the Home Builders Association and 1000 Friends of Oregon, the watchdog group formed to support the state’s land-use planning laws.

Other members were chosen from each Neighborhood District Coalition and two grassroots organizations concerned about the increasing number of demolition and infill projects, United Neighborhoods for Reform and Anti-Displacement PDX. Still others work in home design and the construction field (see sidebar).

“Due to the large number of applications we received, we could not appoint everyone. However, we had some stellar candidates — too many, in fact,” Hales said. “This is a good problem to have.”

Hales says the committee is only one part of the city’s response to concerns raised about the growing number of residential demolitions and infill projects.

“In addition to the Residential Infill Project, my neighborhoods initiative is addressing long-term citywide growth strategies through such efforts as the Comprehensive Plan Update, discouraging demolitions, and expanded affordable rental housing development to ensure Portland’s prized neighborhoods remain livable and affordable,” Hales said last week.

Infill input

The first meeting of the Residential Infill Project Stakeholder Advisory Committee will be 6 p.m. Tuesday, Sept. 15, in Room 2500A of the 1900 Building, 1900 S.W. Fourth Ave.

Following a brief introduction by Mayor Charlie Hales, committee members will meet the project staff and fellow stakeholders, then hear more about the project and residential infill issues.

The committee will continue to meet each month as necessary throughout the duration of the project.

More information is available on the project website at portlandoregon.gov/bps/67728.

Committee members include:

- Linda Bauer, East Portland Action Plan
- Sarah Cantine, Scott Edwards Architecture
- Alan DeLaTorre, Portland Commission on Disability
- Jim Gorter, Southwest Neighbors, Inc.
- John Hasenberg, Oregon Remodelers Association
- Marshall Johnson, Energy Trust of Oregon
- Emily Kemper, Manufactured Structures Board
- Douglas MacLeod, Homebuilders Association
- Mary Kyle McCurdy, 1000 Friends of Oregon
- Maggie McGann, Habitat for Humanity
- Rod Merrick, Merrick Architecture Planning
- Rick Michaelson, Neighbors West Northwest
- Michael Molinaro, Southeast Uplift
- Danell Norby, Anti-Displacement PDX
- Vic Remmers, Everett Homes
- Brandon Spencer-Hartle, Restore Oregon
- Eli Spevak, Orange Splot Construction

- Barbara Strunk, United Neighborhoods for Reform
- Teresa St. Martin, Planning and Sustainability Commission
- Young Sun, Immigrant and Refugee Committee Organization
- David Sweet, Central Northeast Neighbors
- Eric Thompson, Homebuilders Association
- Justin Wood, Fish Construction NW
- Garlynn Woodsong, Northeast Coalition of Neighbors
- Tatiana Xenelis-Mendoza, North Portland Neighborhood Services

City, county leaders ask landlords to 'consider a veteran' in housing effort

*By Jennifer Anderson
September 8, 2015*

Local business, nonprofit and elected leaders on Tuesday started their 100-day push to end veteran homelessness by the end of this year.

That is, to get to a "functional zero," which Multnomah County leaders say acknowledges that there will still be veterans experiencing homelessness after 2015, but they have systems in place to ensure it's brief, rare and non-reoccurring.

County Chair Deborah Kafoury spoke to the progress of the "A Home for Every Veteran," which has been a big focus this year for the city, county and other partners.

So far the initiative has connected 430 veterans to permanent housing, but there are still 290 to go.

"While we have rent assistance and other tools to help get vets back into housing — what we don't have are the apartments," Kafoury said at a Tuesday news conference at the Erickson Fritz Apartments in Old Town.

"Over the last year demand for rental housing has skyrocketed in the Portland region. Only 2.4 percent of rental units are vacant. And this shortage of units is driving up costs. Rents have jumped 16 percent countrywide. And in neighborhoods like Eliot, Buckman and Mount Tabor rents have increased more than 28 percent."

Those forces are "creating a state of emergency for renters in our community," Kafoury added. "It also makes it much more difficult for us to help vets get into stable housing."

A Home for Every Veteran partners have been working with landlords who want to provide homes for veterans, but many say they don't have vacancies.

The ask from local elected leaders has been, "If you have a vacant unit please consider a veteran — a veteran who comes with unprecedented resources behind him or her to help them be good tenants."

When a vacancy does occur, there's a long list of people waiting for their chance to rent the apartment.

County leaders are also asking that if anyone knows a landlord with an available partner, to visit ahomeforeveryvet.net and flag that resource.

Other efforts

Ending veteran homelessness — or bringing it to a "functional zero" — isn't a new idea.

The White House started a national effort in 2009; their target date was also the end of 2015, which is now 100 days away.

Other cities have also tackled it successfully, including New Orleans, Houston, Phoenix and Salt Lake City.

Partners in Multnomah County's effort have included Home Forward, Income Property Management, BedMart, Princeton Property Management, Cascade Management and Portland Community Reinvestment Initiatives.

The event precedes an event on Friday called Veteran Stand Down, a venue for veterans to connect to critical services such as housing, employment, medical, haircuts, clothing and more.

That event is set for 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the Veterans Memorial Coliseum.

For more: pdxstanddown.com, ahomeforeveryvet.net.

Willamette Week

Ted Wheeler Pitches Himself as Progressive While Announcing Bid for Portland Mayor

"Progressive includes progress," he says.

By Beth Slovic

September 9, 2015

Oregon State Treasurer Ted Wheeler stood atop Revolution Hall on Wednesday morning and made his first pitch to Portland voters that he should be the city's next mayor.

His announcement stuck closely to what will likely be the theme of his campaign and his strategy for challenging incumbent Mayor Charlie Hales, who rode into office in 2012 on the promise he would bring grown-up leadership to City Hall. Wheeler wants voters to believe he's the candidate who can turn Hales' pledges into action—an idea he's neatly packaged to suggest he's to the left of Hales, where Hales may be the most vulnerable in 2016.

"I'm running because we can't call ourselves a progressive city unless we're making real progress for those who need our help the most," Wheeler told the gathered crowd of about 100. "I'm running for mayor because I know we can do better." And then, in case anyone missed it, he added: "'Progressive' includes progress."

Wheeler's priorities include expanding affordable housing, improving government transparency and finding a solution to repair Portland's crumbling roads. On that last point he said he'd trust

voters to decide whether they can afford a new, dedicated funding stream for roads, but that he'd likely support an increase in the gas tax to pay for improvements. (Hales has so far refused to put the question to voters.)

The 20-minute press conference included several light moments, including one when a reporter asked Wheeler whether his family's affluence put him out of touch with average voters.

Wheeler jokingly asked if he could translate the reporter's question: "Ted, are you too rich to run for mayor?" (The answer was no, of course.)

Wheeler never took direct aim at Hales, saying his fight wasn't with the mayor. But he did make not-so-subtle jabs at the incumbent, saying for example that real-estate developers should have to pay their fair share of the costs of new public services. Real-estate developers are among Hales' top donors.

With his wife, Katrina, at his side, Wheeler displayed the goofy earnestness many Portland voters have already come to expect from him.

"I'm totally jazzed," he says, "about the journey ahead."

VIDEO: Ted Wheeler Says People Are Sleeping In Cars On His Street

By WW Staff

September 9, 2015

Oregon treasurer and newly-minted Portland mayoral candidate Ted Wheeler sat down with WW's news staff Tuesday morning to discuss his bid to unseat incumbent Mayor Charlie Hales.

He opened by declaring City Hall had failed to address "a crisis on the streets of this city." His salvo made clear Wheeler intends to hammer Hales early and often on Portland's high rate of homelessness.

Homeless camps and panhandling have vexed Hales since he took office. This summer, he pledged increased services as camps on the Eastbank Esplanade keep growing.

We challenged Wheeler's claim that City Hall has sat on its hands. What about big projects like the Bud Clark Commons, a \$47 million homeless services center in Old Town that opened in 2011?

He replied that those steps weren't enough. Such projects haven't addressed people living on the verge of losing their homes, he said, or those who are episodically homeless.

He described people living in cars in his West Hills neighborhood.

"There's people virtually every single night of the week in front of my home, living in cars," he says in this video clip. "It's a safe street. It's an easy place for people to park, and nobody hassles 'em."

[Watch his full response.](#)

Ted Wheeler is Running for Portland Mayor

By WW Staff
September 9, 2015

State Treasurer Ted Wheeler will announce today that he's challenging incumbent Mayor Charlie Hales in next May's primary election.

And in an interview with WW on Tuesday, he said his top priorities will include confronting a homelessness "crisis on the streets of our city," restoring public trust in city government and creating additional economic opportunity for Portlanders.

Wheeler, 53, was elected Multnomah County chairman in 2006 and was appointed Oregon treasurer in 2010. In that job, he manages state borrowing and helps guide the investment of nearly \$90 billion in state pension funds.

His political career has been marked by incremental competence, beginning with the steady hand he brought to Multnomah County after the tumult of the Diane Linn years.

As state treasurer, he tried to professionalize the office (before politics, Wheeler worked in finance and is heir to a significant lumber fortune) but flopped at his biggest effort at reform—an attempt to amend the constitution to borrow money to make higher ed more accessible.

Because of term limits, he can't seek re-election to state treasurer, and it's been widely understood that he would someday run for governor (an ambition he did not rule out in WW's Sept. 8 interview with him).

Wheeler saw his path to Mahonia Hall blocked by the resignation of Gov. John Kitzhaber and the elevation of then-Secretary of State Kate Brown to replace him in February.

Wheeler flirted with a gubernatorial run throughout the summer before fixing his sights on City Hall.

"We have a governor in Kate Brown who's making progress," he tells WW, "and a mayor in Charlie Hales who isn't."

Visit wweek.com throughout the week for video highlights of Wheeler's first campaign-trail interview.

How a \$10,000 Charge from Portland's Sewer Bureau Grew to \$25,000

By Beth Slovic
September 9, 2015

When Bryan Smith bought his 70-year-old bungalow in Southeast Portland in 2003, he was drawn to the huge flowering tree in the front yard.

He paid little attention to the septic tank a stone's throw from the tree on the home's 8,000-square-foot lot. And he says no one told him he'd need to disconnect it.

Now that septic tank is costing Smith his home, he says—and shining a light on a city of Portland policy that allows fees on homeowners to grow significantly if they don't connect to the public sewer when the city tells them to.

A year after Smith, a bartender, bought the Brentwood-Darlington house for about \$140,000, the city of Portland sent him a notice that it had extended a city sewer line to his street in 1994 and that he had until 2007 to connect to it. Although Smith's septic tank worked fine, ones that fail can contaminate groundwater. About 2,000 homes in Portland still lack sewer service, says Linc Mann, a spokesman for the city's sewer bureau.

In 2004, the city would have charged Smith \$9,823 in fees to connect.

Smith, now 46, says he doesn't remember getting a notice until 2008, the year he opened a pub on Southeast Hawthorne Boulevard then called Vertigo. "If I had been financially stable," he says, "I would have done it right then."

But he was pouring money into his bar. The city's financing options for low-income residents didn't make the cost of hooking up affordable, he says. In 2008, the city would have charged him \$10,521. That didn't include the price of hiring a contractor to decommission the septic tank and to connect the house to the city line, an additional expense of about \$5,000.

"Business wasn't that great," he says. "Hooking up to the sewer was the last thing on my mind."

A year ago, Smith sold his pub. He was losing too much money. He and his girlfriend, Rachel Fishman, decided they needed to get their finances in order, including taking care of some deferred maintenance in their Malden Street home, whose value had increased substantially. Turns out, so had the fees.

They decided to seek a home equity loan and pay for the sewer repairs. By now, though, the city's fee for connecting to the sewer has gone up to \$24,721, not including the cost of decommissioning the tank and building the connection from their house to the street.

They couldn't get the loan they wanted to do the work, though, because they weren't connected to the sewer, Smith and Fishman say. The city would loan them the money, but interest costs put that out of reach, they say.

"We're going to have to walk away," Fishman, a sales operation manager for a large corporation, told Smith after picking him up from work recently.

City officials justify the price increase by noting that city ratepayers have been subsidizing the bonds that paid for the Malden Street project since 1992.

Mann, the spokesman for the Bureau of Environmental Services, says the couple should have connected a decade ago. "The fact is this has been put off for 10 years," he said. "They would have been much better off if they had done it 10 years ago."

Smith doesn't deny that. "I agree with them," he says. "Obviously it would have been better. I still couldn't have afforded it."

The couple put the house on the market on Aug. 16. So far buyers have been put off by the looming \$30,000 expense.

Even if they do sell, the couple is in a pinch.

They'll be leaving behind a \$1,100 monthly mortgage to pay rent that likely will hover above \$2,000 per month. The couple has two young kids, and they'd like them to be able to stay in the same schools. That means their choices are limited.

"The reality is we won't be able to buy this kind of house with our income again," Fishman says.

She adds: "It's reasonable for there to be some sort of penalty, but that penalty shouldn't be on the order of 300 percent."

The Portland Mercury

Hall Monitor

Wheeler's Choice

*By Dirk VanderHart
September 9, 2015*

TED WHEELER wants to make one thing clear: It's not about Mayor Charlie Hales.

Wheeler, the Oregon state treasurer and former Multnomah County chair, says it's just that Portland's too unique and special a place to risk losing at the hands of its various and worrying problems—displacement, swelling homelessness, and crumbling roads, to name a few.

He likes Hales, Wheeler says. But then again, he's also going to set aside designs on the governor's office and spend the next eight months or more trying to take him out.

"The bottom line is this: Oregon has a governor in Kate Brown who's making progress," Wheeler tells the Mercury. "We have a mayor in Charlie Hales who is not."

And just like that, Portland's got an honest-to-god mayoral race on its hands. Wheeler plans to formally announce his candidacy at a press conference on Wednesday, September 9.

A lot of people saw this coming, but it doesn't make it any less compelling. In a town where incumbents are bulletproof, Wheeler's a moneyed (he comes from a wealthy timber family), seasoned (eight years in local and statewide office), and successful politician who seems to have an actual shot. Polling certainly suggests as much—the Oregonian reported in August that one survey showed Wheeler and Hales roughly neck-and-neck in the public's estimation.

And Wheeler knows the right pressure points to massage to stir up anti-Hales fervor. He spent much of our interview railing on the state of the city's "rotting" roads, and the mayor's failed, sometimes flailing attempts last year to find a street fee that could be enacted without a public vote.

Wheeler thinks taxpayers are smart enough to figure out a street fee—some street fee—is the right call, if city leaders will level with them.

"The first thing the mayor said is, 'Whatever we do we're going to make sure the taxpayers of this city don't have a say,'" Wheeler says. "What that tells the citizens is 'City hall thinks we're stupid.'"

Other talking points you can expect to hear from Wheeler in the months ahead: More money for affordable housing, including transitional housing for the homeless; a more open discussion of the factors at play in Portland's controversial growth patterns; and a reckoning with Airbnb, which Wheeler says is eating into valuable housing stock.

"These are things that are important to people who live here," he says. "All of us know that Portland City Hall isn't delivering."

Critics will see some hypocrisy in that statement. Wheeler's known for some bold ideas, but has struggled at times to make his case—much in the way that Hales struggled with streets.

One example: Wheeler's Oregon Opportunity Initiative, a scheme for getting Oregon students access to more financial aid that went before voters last fall. It was a compelling idea that Oregonians nonetheless shot down by a wide margin.

The defeat clearly still grates at Wheeler—as does the suggestion he's struggled to get things done since Governor Ted Kulongoski appointed him state treasurer in 2010, following the death of former Treasurer Ben Westlund (Wheeler twice won election to the office).

"From my perspective," he says, "I've only begun to fight."

It's the fight for the mayor's office, though, that'll be the toughest of Wheeler's career. True, he unseated County Chair Diane Linn in 2006, but that overwhelming rout was attributed as much to Linn's unpopularity as it was to Wheeler's appeal.

In Hales, Wheeler has an opponent who's a savvy communicator, able to winsomely pound his version of his mayoral tenure into voters' heads at every opportunity—including a much-improved budget picture (largely attributable to external forces) and a back-to-basics spending ethos the mayor's stuck to rather closely.

And then there's the mayor's war chest—impressive, but also telling for an incumbent who hasn't yet had a meaningful challenger. Since May of last year, Hales has raised more than \$100,000, and new money's trickling in all the time. It's a sign Hales knows he's open to attack, and it'll almost certainly prove a useful defense.

"This race isn't going to be won based on who can raise money from real estate developers," Wheeler says. "This is going to be won by me, because I'm going to make the best case."

Wheeler's short one former ally in his new push: Popular Portland campaign consultant Liz Kaufman, who helped him win county chair, but more recently has been a Hales confidant. Wheeler didn't want to talk about Kaufman's role—or lack of it—in his campaign. In her stead, he's scooped up Jake Weigler, a local consultant who helped US Senator Ron Wyden win re-election in 2010 and managed City Commissioner Steve Novick's upstart senatorial bid in 2008.

Wheeler admits he didn't plan on this. He'd been eyeing a bid for the governor's office in 2018, before Governor John Kitzhaber's resignation launched Kate Brown to power, drastically changing the scenario. And it's true that Wheeler's got to do something if he wants to stay in public office—he's term limited at his job as treasurer.

But Wheeler swears this campaign isn't grasping for the next best thing. He says he's here to save a city.

"This really isn't about Charlie Hales," Wheeler said for probably the eighth time toward the end of our interview. "It's about the problems that he's failed on."

Wheeler planned to explain all this to Hales the next day, right before announcing his candidacy.

The Common Good

A Faith-Based Group Has a Big Voice on Affordable Housing

By Shelby R. King

September 9, 2015

AFFORDABLE HOUSING advocates have a nontraditional ally in the Portland-based civic group Metropolitan Alliance for Common Good (MACG)—a collection of congregations, unions, and community organizations.

It's a good thing they do. As city development officials push back against recommendations they spend more on affordable housing, MACG's recent work is showing that the spending isn't just necessary—it's doable.

In July, members of MACG approached the Portland Housing Advisory Commission (PHAC)—a volunteer committee that advises the Portland Housing Bureau and city council on housing policy issues—with a suggestion: Increase the amount of Portland's Tax-Increment Financing money specially reserved for affordable housing from 30 percent to 50 percent. That money is the city's largest source of dedicated cash for affordable housing, but it's not enough to address Portland's needs.

"We are in a crisis and people are being dispossessed from their homes and their neighborhoods," says Bob Brown, a MACG member who's been working on this issue for months. "It's bad, and it's going to get worse if we don't do something."

In 2006, the city began setting aside 30 percent of Tax-Increment Financing money for affordable housing. Every five years—including this year—the city reviews the program's parameters and can make changes. PHAC (pronounced "p-hack") is tasked with making recommendations, but city council ultimately decides what changes, if any, to make.

Brown was one of 97 MACG members who, on September 1, packed a PHAC review hearing for that mandatory review process. Staff members from the Portland Development Commission (PDC) and the housing bureau were also at the meeting.

"PDC didn't say anything explicit, but if I was to read between the lines I'd say their attitude was that this is important, but we have other obligations we're committed to spending that money on," Brown says. "But we're here, we're watching them, and we want them to know we're watching them."

Shawn Uhlman, a spokesman for PDC, agrees that Portland needs more affordable housing, but argues that the increase MACG is pushing would mean cutting into the budgets of other vital projects.

"It's a zero-sum game," Uhlman says. "If you increase the amount set aside for affordable housing, it has to come from somewhere else."

MACG was prepared for that line of thinking. At the September 1 hearing, the group unleashed its secret weapon—a former senior housing policy manager for the PDC named Leah Greenwood.

Greenwood combed through budgets for existing urban renewal areas—pockets of land in which the city snatches up some property taxes to pay for improvements—and found that five-year projections for some of those have funds available that aren't allocated for specific projects. She testified at the hearing that the money could be used over the next five years for creating affordable housing without cutting into other projects.

"I have reviewed the budget and I believe an additional \$55 million could be allocated," she testified at the meeting. "At least five publicly owned sites could be made available for development of affordable housing."

According to Greenwood, PDC isn't doing anything improper in its budget projections— but she argues that in the face of a housing crisis of the magnitude Portland is experiencing, spending on affordable housing now is a wise long-term investment.

"The credit should go to MACG for organizing and understanding that investing in affordable housing supports their goals of creating a healthy economy," Greenwood says. "Without their influence, I think the advisory commission would have done the review quietly and the [recommended] funding level would have stayed where it was."

At the end of the hearing, PDC staff asked the advisory commission if they'd like to reduce their recommendation from 50 percent. The commission declined.

"I am proud that the [PHAC] is pushing city government on the issue of increasing the allocation of [urban renewal area] funds for affordable housing," Dike Dame, a local developer who sits on the commission, wrote in an email. "I believe the message [the commission] was sending in its refusal to revisit its stance is it wants the time to be taken in a thoughtful and comprehensive manner... and did not feel that was the direction in which some decision makers were heading."

Share and Share a Bike

Apparently Bike Share's Finally Coming to Portland?

By Dirk VanderHart

September 9, 2015

ON JULY 23, an odd-looking blue bicycle with a bulky computer on the back was locked up in front of Portland City Hall, conspicuous among the commuting rigs of city staffers.

It was a bike-share bike—but not the sort Portland's been looking forward to for years. This bike, made by New York-based Social Bicycles, didn't rely on special docking stations. Users could locate it with their smartphone, tap in a PIN to unlock it, and drop it off anywhere in a large geographic area—like Car2Go, but with a bike.

No one at city hall wanted to talk much about the blue bike at the time, but that's about to change. If all goes as planned, 600 of these "smart bikes" will be clustered around town by next summer.

The city swears this isn't a drill: Bike share's finally coming to Portland.

After years of fruitless searching for sponsorship money—and looking dejectedly on as other cities adopted bike-share programs—the Portland Bureau of Transportation (PBOT) says it's finally ready to move forward with a system of publicly owned rental bikes in Inner Portland.

The kicker? It's doing so with cash that's been sitting around for years.

No sponsor's raising its hand, but by reconfiguring a years-old bike-share contract to match up with Social Bicycles' system—a move that'll go before Portland City Council on September 16—PBOT says it can buy 600 bikes with \$1.8 million in grant money the city got from Metro in 2011.

It's not as large as the 750-bike system Portlanders were promised in the past, but the new scheme is still a big development as Portland aspires to convince 25 percent of commuters to travel by bike by 2030, and as its once-unquestionable reputation as the country's best bicycle city has dimmed. A lack of bike share was a major reason Bicycling magazine bounced Portland from first to fourth in its ranking of top bike cities last year (New York, with the country's largest bike-share system, took first), and it's prompted criticism by the League of American Bicyclists, which ranks cities' bike friendliness.

"This is the first major system like this in the US," says Justin Ginsburgh, vice president of business development for New York-based Motivate, the company that Portland City Council tapped to run the city's bike share back in 2012. (Back then, Motivate was known as Alta Bicycle Share, and was based in Portland.)

In recent years, Motivate's launched and run enormous bike-share programs in Chicago and New York under an older model—built around docking stations where riders have to lock up their rides. Here, the company's delving into a smart-bike model that's popped up in cities like Tampa and Phoenix.

The company bills Portland as "the innovation laboratory" for smart bikes. With plentiful bike lanes and ubiquitous bicycle parking, Ginsburgh says Portland's system will push the limits of what bike share can be.

The reasons lie in Social Bicycle's business model. In Portland, the company plans to install 30 special bicycle "hubs," and designate another 30 of the city's existing corrals for the same purpose. Bike-share users can lock up a bike at those hubs free of charge.

Users are free to lock the bikes up at any other bike rack within the system's service area, too, but will have to pay a small fee for doing so. People who pick up a bike locked outside of a designated hub will receive a credit if they drop it off back at a hub. Motivate hopes this will reduce or eliminate the costly need to haul bikes around by truck so as to "rebalance" the system.

The city's also billing this as one of the cheapest bike-share systems in the country: rides will start at \$2.50 for a half-hour. Yearly memberships, on the other hand, would be costly—up to \$15 a month, or \$180 a year, which is higher than many similar systems.

This is bike share, so of course there are big questions. The largest: Will Portland finally be able to attract the sponsorship money that'll be needed to operate and expand the system? Motivate is taking responsibility for that task, and says Portland's at no risk if sponsorships remain elusive.

"If we struggle finding sponsorship, we're still going to run the system," Ginsburgh says. The city declined to release a copy of the new contract terms with the Mercury prior to deadline.

Another big question deals with equity concerns. Bike-share programs typically begin in the most-dense, moneyed neighborhoods of cities before expanding—and Portland's no different. The proposed service area hits downtown, but goes only as far east as SE 16th. The thin Eastside service area stretches from about SE Clinton to N Killingsworth. It's a tiny, largely privileged region of the city.

That could affect city council support for the deal. Equity has been a particular concern for City Commissioner Amanda Fritz in the past (she and Commissioner Dan Saltzman are seen as the likeliest opponents of this new plan, though their offices say neither has reached a conclusion).

Lastly, there's a chance that a bike-share model—a lot like the one PBOT envisions—may already be in operation by the time Motivate comes to town. Earlier this year, a company called Spinlister announced plans to create a brand-new bike-share system where private owners purchase smart bikes at a discounted rate, then put them around town for public rental.

That system was supposed to roll out this fall, but Spinlister has since gone quiet. Two representatives from the company declined to share current plans with the Mercury.

Bike Share's Coming! PBOT Says It'll Have a 600-Bike System Up Next Summer

By Dirk VanderHart

September 9, 2015

ON JULY 23, an odd-looking blue bicycle with a bulky computer on the back was locked up in front of Portland City Hall, conspicuous among the commuting rigs of city staffers.

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Here's Where Bike Share Will (Maybe) Be Available Next Year

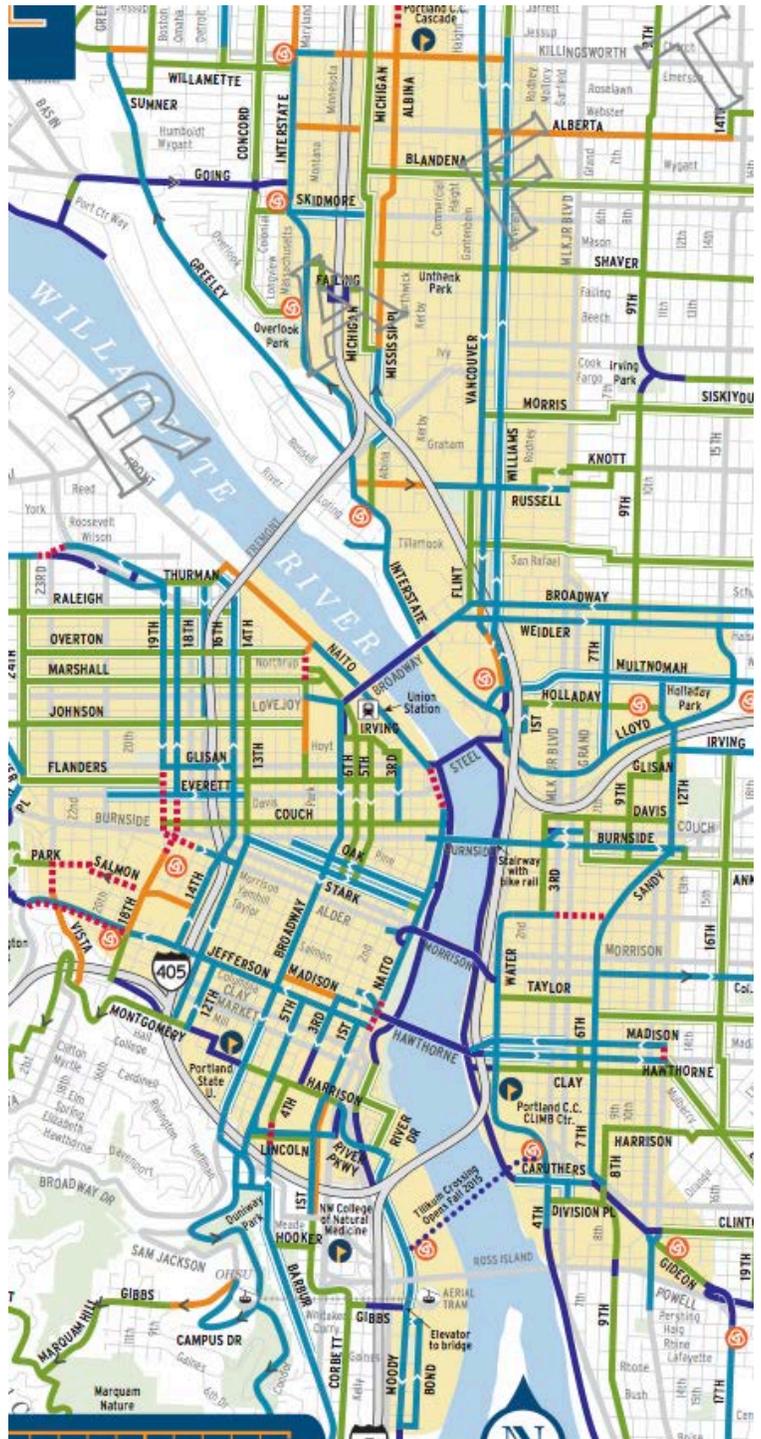
*By Dirk VanderHart
September 9, 2015*

Bike share's coming to Portland! Uh, well part of it.

With PBOT's announcement it's going with a cheaper, more versatile bike share program than originally planned come inevitable concerns about access and equity. The city's always proposed starting bike share in and around downtown, then expanding if/when the system gains popularity and more money from interested sponsors, and that's very much still the plan. Here's the slim swath of Portland where PBOT's proposing its initial 600-bike rollout next summer (it's the tan sections). Hit the jump for more.

In some ways, this is a surprisingly small area. It's true that bike share systems often target tourists as much as residents, but even by that token the proposed service area leaves out some bustling and popular destinations in Northeast and Southeast (Alberta! Hawthorne! The gustatory glitz of SE Division!).

Beyond that, it'd leave a whole lot of residents with no more a viable means to and from home than they already have. When it's not shuttling around sight-seers, bike share's frequently seen as a last mile sort of conveyance, getting people from



their bus or train stop to home more quickly. This initial rollout would help some residents, but many of them probably don't much need it.

"I think the City of Portland is being pretty thoughtful about it," says Justin Ginsburgh, vice president of development at New York-based Motivate, which will run the bike share program (the company was called Alta Bicycle Share and based here when it was hired by the city). "They understand you need a robust system in the core. Once you have that, then you're able to expand beyond there."

All this is partly understandable. Portland's been trying for three years to attract a sponsor who could help roll out a big system, and has come up with nothing. The 600 bikes PBOT's proposed are being bought mostly with \$1.8 million we've had since 2011. It's a far cheaper situation than what Portland had been planning, and potentially more-nimble than other bike share cites.

The system PBOT's buying is more akin to Car2Go than traditional bike share systems—meaning you can park a bike anywhere in that tan service area, not just at specified dock points. (There will, however, be "hubs" where it's cheaper to park bikes. Riders who want to lock up outside of those hubs would have to pay a fee. The city doesn't know where hub locations will be yet, or what the system will be called.)

It'll be interesting to see what kind of political support this long-sought program gets at a time when Portland's as concerned as it's ever been about people being shunted to the side. Commissioner Amanda Fritz has repeatedly raised concerns about bike share being unavailable in farther flung parts of town, and it looks like this one will be unavailable even in many close-in 'hoods. Fritz may well vote against the new plan (PBOT's seeking council approval to modify a contract and move forward). Her office says it's too soon to tell.

Dan Saltzman's also been a consistent skeptic. He's opposed to spending any city dollars on bike share (which isn't part of the plan right now). Even if those two go against the proposed system though, it's got likely allies in Commissioners Steve Novick and Nick Fish, and Mayor Charlie Hales.

There are plans, as I say, to expand this system, but that's going to be wholly reliant on Motivate. The company's struck out on finding sponsors so far, but says it's marshaled a new marketing team that's going balls-out to find money.

"We're being a lot more creative and aggressive," Ginsburgh says. "We're beating the bushes in Portland."

He stresses Portland bears no risk in this—that Motivate will operate the system even if sponsors take longer to convince than planned. The exact language of that agreement's should become public on Friday.

In Other News

By Mercury Staff
September 9, 2015

BAD NEWS for night owls: Late-night bud runs might be out of the question once the City of Portland begins licensing pot establishments.

According to draft rules the city's considering for cannabis regulatory licenses, which were posted online earlier this month, the city might limit operating hours for medical marijuana dispensaries and retail pot shops to between 7 am and 9 pm.

That could hit home for some businesses. While it's not uncommon for Portland dispensaries to close at 7 pm or earlier, some stay open until 10 or 11 pm. The Green Front, a dispensary at NE 68th and Glisan, is open 24 hours a day. Owner Kate Williams says she'd oppose the hour limitations.

"A lot of our business happens between the hours of 7 pm and 2 am," Williams says. "Our patients would not be happy."

City council is scheduled to take up the license rules on September 16. DIRK VANDERHART

MAYOR CHARLIE HALES and Commissioner Steve Novick have a new booster helping make the case that Portland needs more money to fix its streets: the City Club of Portland. Well, a City Club committee, at any rate.

In a report released Wednesday, September 9, a nine-member committee all but demanded that the city stop everything and put its efforts toward funding street maintenance, concluding, "The time to act is now."

The committee's report estimates Portland needs to spend more than \$2 billion over the next decade to meet its maintenance and improved safety goals. And the group suggests city officials immediately begin implementing a series of new taxes and fees—ranging from a gas tax, to a flat fee on a household's water and sewer bill, to a payroll tax for people who work in Portland but live outside the city.

The problem? Neither Novick nor Hales seems particularly primed to act after being repeatedly rebuffed by interest groups in last year's quest to establish a street fee. If and when they do take the matter up again, though, count on them citing this new bit of cheerleading. DVH

Portland Business Journal

City Club committee: Portland streets in critical condition

*By Andy Giegerich
September 9, 2015*

A City Club of Portland committee has called on city commissioners to, without delay, find new revenue sources for street repairs.

Those sources could include a local gas tax and higher registration fees.

Portland needs street fee funds, and fast, according to a City Club committee.

A research committee for the group, which delves into and analyzes civic matters, made the call in its report "Portland's Streets: End the funding gridlock," issued Wednesday morning. The Street Fee Research Committee concluded that "Portland needs new revenue for street maintenance and safety and that City Council should not delay adopting a solution."

The City Club's research committee called for "an integrated funding package that includes a number of revenue sources identified in the report, including existing city revenue, a local gas tax and increased vehicle registration fee."

Portland has an estimated \$1.2 billion street repair and maintenance backlog.

The full group must vote on the measure before it becomes a full City Club recommendation. City Club members will discuss the report at its Sept. 11 Friday Forum.

The Street Fee Research Committee's conclusion is simple: The longer Portland puts off finding a funding solution, the more it will cost to repair city streets later.

"No one funding source will raise enough money for maintenance and safety," said Committee Chair Jennifer Rollins, in a release. "Stakeholders must come together to develop a compromise, multifaceted funding plan that will ensure Portland has the infrastructure it needs for the future."

A majority of the committee agreed to not recommend a transportation utility fee that would charge flat fees to households and variable trip-related fees to businesses.

Ted Wheeler to seek Portland mayor's spot

By Andy Giegerich

September 9, 2015

With a Wednesday morning campaign launch, Oregon's Treasurer has turned Portland's 2016 mayoral race into a what promises to be a tough battle for the incumbent.

Ted Wheeler will announce his candidacy for the Portland mayor's spot next year. An early poll suggests that Wheeler will immediately provide stiff competition for Portland Mayor Charlie Hales, who's seeking reelection.

Wheeler will make his announcement at Revolution Hall, in Southeast Portland.

The event will feature speeches from Rep. Lew Frederick, who represents North and Northeast Portland, former Morrison Child and Family Services CEO Jay Bloom and restaurateur Lisa Schroeder.

Wheeler had served as Multnomah County Chair before moving into the state's top money role, replacing Ben Westlund after Westlund died in 2010.

His decision to run had been anticipated since last summer.

Wheeler's biggest achievements in Salem include successfully pushing for a statewide retirement savings account option.

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Businesses to Novick: Gas tax should be coupled with ongoing city support

By Andy Giegerich

September 9, 2015

SEE CORRECTION AT THE END OF THIS ARTICLE

The Portland Business Alliance, in addressing one proposal that could fund Portland's streets, laid out its stance on a citywide gas tax to the city's transportation commissioner.

Commissioner Steve Novick and other leaders are trying to find ways to chip away at Portland's \$1.2 billion transportation repair and maintenance backlog. A 10 cent gas tax would raise \$58 million over four years.

The Portland Business Alliance, in a letter to Novick, suggested that any gas tax be accompanied by ongoing support from the city to address street maintenance and safety issues.

A gas tax, the PBA noted in its Tuesday letter to Novick, would require voter approval.

"In the current budget allocation, the city found additional one-time revenue for transportation maintenance and safety improvements," wrote, Sandra McDonough, the Alliance's president and CEO, who noted that the PBA is willing to discuss a gas tax or another user-based tax as long as it is part of a broader transportation package.

"This is a good first step but, again, if this is a priority, the city should find ongoing resources to bolster maintenance and safety projects. If voters are being asked to support an ongoing increase in taxes, the city should also pledge its ongoing support to the city's road network with their financial resources as well."

The PBA also called for any new street fund revenue to focus on maintenance. The group cited a new report noting that \$119 million per year for 10 years is needed for streets upkeep.

"Until we prioritize maintenance, roads will continue to fall into further disrepair, unnecessarily increasing the cost to bring them back into good conditions and limiting the amount of revenue available for other transportation priorities."

Novick said he nonetheless "wants to explore every plausible option" and is interested in reading a City Club report on streets that's set to be released tomorrow.

A gas tax, he said, remains one of those "plausible options."

CORRECTION

This story corrects an earlier version that indicated that the Portland Business Alliance was against a gas tax. Instead, the PBA said it is willing to discuss a gas tax or another user-based tax as long as it is part of a broader transportation package.

Ted Wheeler Announces He's Running for Mayor of Portland

By Staff

September 9, 2015

At a press conference held this morning at a Southeast Portland high school, State Treasurer Ted Wheeler officially announced his campaign for Mayor of Portland.

Read his speech below:

I'd like to thank my family and friends who have joined me here today. I feel the energy coming from all of you and it gets me even more excited about the journey ahead.

I brought you all together here today to reveal the most poorly kept secret in Oregon politics.

I'm here to announce my candidacy for Mayor of Portland.

I'm running for Mayor because I don't believe we can be a progressive city unless we're making real progress for the people who need our help the most.

We have a stark choice:

Do we want more promises on helping the homeless get transitional housing and the help they need? Or do we want progress?

Do we want another press release on closing the income gap? Or do we want progress?

Do we want endless pledges on fixing roads and making City Hall function? Or do we want progress?

Do we want another election-year proposal on affordable housing or do we want real progress?

Do we want to hear another politician say "Please give me more time" or do we want to make real progress now?

We have nothing short of a crisis on the streets of our city. The homeless are not getting the housing or the help they need. Housing is a problem for the middle class, too. It is increasingly unaffordable for working families. Wage earning Portlanders are falling farther behind. Our streets are crumbling beneath our feet. Even basic things like filling potholes, repairing roads and making our sidewalks safer aren't getting done the way we expect them to get done.

I'm running for Mayor because I know we can do better.

I know this will be a fight. I'm ready to fight. But my fight isn't with Charlie Hales. My fight is with the problems that he's failed to address.

It's not enough to call yourself a progressive, or an activist, or a leader when so many of the basic things that make a community thriving and successful aren't getting done.

You can't claim to be a progressive if you're not making progress on helping the homeless get off the streets, into transitional housing with the mental health care or intervention they need to stay off the streets.

You can't wear the mantle of activism when you have not taken action on creating economic opportunities for the entire city.

And you can't say you are accountable as a leader when too much of the city's business is being conducted behind closed doors, in secret, accessible only to the well-connected and highly paid corporate lobbyists.

Real progress will be increasing the minimum wage and increasing economic opportunities for lower income and middle income Portlanders.

Real progress will be making sure developers pay their fair share for the costs for roads, parks, schools, and other critical infrastructure as part of new development.

Real progress will be expanding affordable housing options so that fewer Portlanders will find themselves priced out and moved out.

And real progress will be making sure that every part of our community has a voice in our government— not just those that can afford to buy a seat at the table.

I'm believe progressive means progress – and I have a strong record of making progress a reality.

As Multnomah County Chair, we showed that one of the most progressive things we could do was to spend tax dollars more responsibly so we could use the savings to protect services for the homeless, the elderly and those most vulnerable in our society.

Under my leadership, the Treasury used smart debt management and vigorous financial oversight to save over \$170 million during the last two years. These savings allow our state to advance our progressive goals of strengthening education, health care and environmental protection.

I was able to show again and again that we can do more than just talk about progressive values – we put them into action in our government and in our communities, for those who were left out and left behind. And we made things better.

And folks, we can do it right here in Portland too.

I believe we can rebuild our roads, improve street safety and finally do what's seemed to defeat too many administrations - fill those potholes.

I believe we should stop talking about the services East Portland needs - and start delivering them.

I believe we can work with our school districts and make our public schools great for every child.

I believe we can make housing more affordable, so that nurses, teachers, firefighters, men and women who are carpenters, plumbers and electricians can continue to live and prosper in Portland.

And I know that one of the best things we can do in this great progressive city is to make sure our government – which should be the engine for so much progress – is conducting the people's business in public, and spending every tax dollar wisely, responsibly, and where it will do the most good. I want to be very clear, when I am mayor, Portland City Hall will not be for sale.

We can lead. We can have action. And we will finally have the city government Portland deserves.

Taking care of those in need. Taking responsibility for protecting our environment. Taking action right now to close the gap between our wealthiest and poorest residents by providing economic opportunity for lower-income and middle-income families. Equal access to our government for every person. Understanding that every dollar we spend came from a taxpayer and we need show our respect for how hard that taxpayer worked to earn those dollars by spending them wisely. These are the authentic values of Portland. And these are my values.

We're here today for those who have heard the words of progress but haven't felt that progress in their own lives or their own city. I'm ready to fight to make sure progressive includes progress – and I want every person in Portland to join me. Change won't come from one person – it will take all of us. All the resources, the talents, the ideas of this great, diverse, energetic city. I'm asking for your help. Please visit my website TedWheeler.com, send me an email, volunteer, give your time, your passion, your insights into helping make this great progressive city even better.

With your help – We'll stop making empty promises. We'll start making real progress. Thank you very much.