

The Portland Tribune

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.

Portland Business Journal

After years of delays, Portland to field bike share proposal

*By Andy Giegerich
September 10, 2015*

It took nearly a decade, but Portland finally looks ready to consider a bike-share proposal, Portland's City Council will analyze a proposal next Wednesday that would be backed by \$2 million in federal grants procured by Metro, according to the Portland Tribune.

Bike Portland reports the city is exploring an agreement with the New York company Social Bicycles. The proposal would place 600 bikes around the central city and inner Eastside.

The city had attempted to forge a deal with Motivate, formerly known as Portland-based Alta, in 2012. Alta sold its bike share component in October (the program had spun out from Alta Planning + Design in 2009) and renamed the company.

Alta had overseen the rollout of New York's bike share program.

Bike Portland is running a comprehensive series on the proposal this week.

Writer Michael Anderson reports it would cost \$2.50 for a half-hour rental. Full-year subscriptions would cost between \$10 and \$15 a month for 90-minute per day uses.