

The Oregonian

Portland wants to buy 3 used streetcars from Seattle

By Elliot Njus

November 13, 2015

Seattle is planning to sell three of its streetcars, and Portland wants to be first in line.

The Portland City Council agreed Thursday to ask ODOT for a \$3.5 million grant to buy the streetcars. With a \$1.5 million match from the city transportation bureau, Portland could offer up to \$5 million for the three vehicles.

Seattle bought the streetcars in 2007, and they're identical to the Inekon 12-Trio model in use in Portland. In fact, they were part of the same order; Seattle used an option under Portland's contract with the Czech Republic firm Inekon to buy its cars.

But Seattle is now upgrading its fleet to operate part of its route on battery power, reducing overhead wire conflicts between streetcars and its electric buses.

Seattle Department of Transportation spokesman Norm Mah said in an email that the city expects to declare the streetcars surplus in 2018 and sell them for \$1.5 million each, half their original purchase price of \$3 million.

"Portland is a potential buyer," he wrote, "but we do not have an agreement with them or any buyer since the surplus process hasn't started."

Portland would use the streetcars to bolster its existing fleet of 17 streetcars. The acquisition would allow Portland Streetcar to reduce the time between streetcar arrival to about 10 minutes, he said, and it would allow for streetcars to be taken out of service for maintenance without affecting wait times.

The streetcars are expected to have a service life of 40 years, and the Seattle vehicles would be about 11 years old in 2018.

"We're in no way too proud to take on a used streetcar," said Portland Streetcar Executive Director Dan Bower.

The Seattle proposition is attractive, Bower said, because Portland would get three streetcars for the price of one brand-new vehicle, which now would cost about \$4 million, and the timeline would be about the same.

It's unclear whether there would be competing bidders. Streetcar systems vary widely in their specifications, but Tacoma, Washington; Tucson, Arizona; and Washington, D.C., all use similar vehicles.

Willamette Week

Portland City Hall Votes to Block Fossil-Fuel Companies From Expanding Their Pipes and Tanks

*By Aaron Mesh
November 13, 2015*

The City Council voted unanimously Thursday night to make Portland the first city in the nation to block the expansion of fossil-fuel pipes and tanks within city limits.

"Over the last months, I've spent more and more and more time thinking about climate change," Mayor Charlie Hales said. "We have one route through the rapids that are just around the corner. We can get to a better future."

The resolution follows a similar ordinance by City Commissioner Amanda Fritz to discourage oil trains from traveling through the city.

But this vote has more teeth.

City Hall has instructed planners to rewrite city building and zoning code so if a company wants to move more oil or coal through Portland, it'll find city rules standing in its way.

The most immediate consequence of the vote: It appears to permanently block the Canadian energy company Pembina from building a liquid propane terminal at the Port of Portland—completing a move by Hales, who yanked the terminal's permits in May.

City Hall sources tell WW that the mayor's office hurried through Thursday's vote because Hales was worried Pembina had found a loophole that would allow it to start construction at the port.

A crowd dressed in red shirts—color-coordinated with the Greenpeace protest that this summer blocked an ice-breaking ship headed for Arctic oil fields—cheered on the vote.

Environmental activists said they saw yesterday's vote, while limited in scope, as the start of a historically significant movement to arrest climate change.

"Using all this fossil fuel is just, in so many ways, leading to catastrophe: for the environment, for the people, for the oceans, for the air," said Wiley G. Barnett, a resident of the Bridgeton neighborhood in Northeast Portland. "It's no secret. Everybody knows: This is it."

The Portland Mercury

Portland Says No to Oil, Just as Union Pacific Announces it's Shipping More Through the Pacific Northwest

By Shelby R. King

November 14, 2015

Portland City Council on Thursday voted unanimously to oppose all future fossil fuel projects in the area. The vote instructs Bureau of Planning and Sustainability staff to examine existing code and policies and make changes that will support the city's intention to keep fossil fuel storage and export projects from coming through the Columbia Gorge and leaving local ports.

Thursday's vote was the second of two decisions that local environmental activists have labeled "historic" and put Portland back in the lead as far as upholding its reputation for being green. Last week, council passed a resolution introduced by Commissioner Amanda Fritz that announced the city's opposition to oil trains coming into Vancouver and Portland via the Columbia Gorge.

Mayor Charlie Hales' resolution seeks to keep new fossil fuel projects out of Portland based on their threat to the environment as well as the health and safety of residents.

"Portland Mayor Charlie Hales is breaking the climate gridlock at the national and international level, showing us that cities and local governments can lead the way, powered by local grassroots activists," says Adriana Voss-Andreae, director of 350PDX. "It's a powerful sign that the fossil fuel era is beginning to come to an end and that we are the change we've been looking for."

In an interesting coincidence, Union Pacific on Friday informed the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) that it plans to increase railway shipments from North Dakota's Bakken formation through the Columbia River Gorge, according to a recent article in the Portland Tribune.

ODOT Rail and Public Transit Division Administrator Hal Gard says this could mean more than 3 million gallons of additional oil could make its way through the Columbia Gorge National Scenic Area each month.

Native American Tribes, residents of small towns, and environmental groups have long expressed their fear that these "bomb trains" could derail, possibly spilling millions of gallons of crude oil into Columbia River waters, decimating fisheries, and possibly exploding.

The City's Planning to Shuttle Homeless Women To A New SW Portland Shelter

*By Dirk VanderHart
November 13, 2015*

The City of Portland will pay to shuttle homeless women and couples from several spots in the central city to a new shelter near SW Portland's Multnomah Village over the next six months.

According to information released by Mayor Charlie Hales' office, the new shelter, an old US Army Reserve Center on SW Multnomah, could house 200 people, though officials plan to start out smaller.

The location of the new shelter's no surprise. The Mercury reported that the mayor was looking at the building, formerly the Sgt. Jerome Sears US Army Reserve Center, shortly after Hales signaled he'd ask his colleagues to declare a housing state of emergency in September.

But the notion of shuttling homeless to a shelter is a new paradigm for the city of Portland—one that might play out more as the city looks far and wide for new places to shelter more than 1,800 Portlanders who sleep on the street.

The mayor's announcement coincides with Portland City Council approving \$1 million in renovations for the old army building yesterday as part of a fall budget adjustment. Council also approved \$1.26 million for shelter services.

"There is a huge willingness right now on the ground to be innovative and try stuff," Hales' chief of staff, Josh Alpert, tells the Mercury. The mayor's office doesn't know when it'll open the new shelter, but says it's paying Transitions Projects to manage the space. The amount of that contract isn't clear.

The shelter's slated to be open at night only, from roughly 6 pm to 9 am the mayor's office says, and will be open initially only to single women.

"If the shelter operator believes it can be done—given the layout of the building and its staffing capacity—they may invite women and their partners to stay as well," says an FAQ on the project, noting a lack of shelter options for opposite sex couples in the city.

Most interesting, though, is the shuttle service Hales' office says its going to enlist to pick up people at "several central city pick-up and drop-off sites." The nearest bus stop to the Sears Center is about a half-mile away.

"It's expected the vast majority of shelter guests will be transported by this system," the FAQ says.

Viable transportation to downtown services has been a key issue in the city, as officials look for viable places to house the homeless. It's been a repeated sticking point for a Central Eastside site where the city want's to move the homeless rest area Right 2 Dream Too, and also a concern for Hazelnut Grove, a new organized tent camp near North Greeley and Interstate.

Hales is clearly hoping to preempt any concern that neighbors may have with the shelter, at 2730 SW Multnomah.

"There is an expectation that guests do not spend excessive time in the neighborhood and respect neighbors and the community," the FAQ says. "The operator will voice an ongoing expectation to guests that drug and alcohol use, aggressive behavior, and other behaviors that are disruptive to the community are unacceptable."

The announcement marks the second time this week Portland saw news of a new shelter. On Tuesday, downtown's First Congregational United Church of Christ revealed it would host a 13-bed shelter for homeless veterans.

Daily Journal of Commerce

City Council favoring proposed changes for accessory structures

*By Garrett Andrews
November 13, 2015*

The Portland City Council gave preliminary support to new proposed accessory structure design guidelines, which are expected to simplify the permitting process and lower construction costs for accessory dwelling units.

Recommended draft revisions to Portland's Accessory Structures Zoning Code breezed through Thursday's regular council meeting. A second reading and a vote will take place later this month. A focus group of citizens helped guide formation of the proposed changes, which were compiled over the past 12 months. They were approved by the Planning and Sustainability Commission in September.

The revision process was a joint effort between the Bureau of Planning and Sustainability and the Bureau of Development Services. Planners and technicians sought to have all detached structures treated with greater uniformity and consistency, and the permitting process be more streamlined, according to BDS Director Paul Scarlett. He told the council that average customers could save up to \$2,600 on adjustments, and waits of up to 10 weeks could be eliminated.

Accessory structures are defined as those of a secondary importance to a site's primary use. This category has grown over the past 25 years to include a grab bag of outbuildings – sheds, pool houses, artist studios, mechanical outbuildings, garages, ADUs and others. A major goal of the code revision project was to plan based on an accessory structure's "form" over its "function." And in looking at areas to address, the focus group zeroed in on the rules that builders most commonly ask to be tweaked.

“What we’re doing is trying to create a uniform approach,” planner Matt Wickstrom said.

Today, the city on average issues four to five permits for accessory structures each operating day. Most are for garages, though the BDS has seen a large increase in ADU permits since 2010. In this five-year period, the city has issued 400 adjustment reviews (29 percent of permit applications) – including 83 for height.

Wickstrom said that under the changes, approximately half of those 83 height adjustment reviews would not have been necessary.

Under the revisions, the height limit would be set at 20 feet for all accessory structures. And instead of being required to strictly match the style and materials of a property’s main structure, ADU designers would be allowed greater design flexibility. Setback requirements would be eased to allow more small buildings at a property’s sides and rear. Rules restricting the placement of attached and detached mechanical equipment would be softened.

Commissioners asked questions about historic tree protections, mechanical buildings’ noise impacts and the city’s waiver on system development charges for ADUs, which is set to expire in July 2016. Six members of the public addressed the council; none opposed the revisions.

“I just want to convey that these changes are extremely popular with homeowners,” said ADU advocate Kol Peterson, who noted that he has spoken with more than 200 homeowners about the Accessory Structures Zoning Code Update project. “And I think they’re fantastic as well.”

Peterson told the council that if SDCs between \$15,000 and \$18,000 are reinstated, ADU construction could suffer significantly.

Also, ADU builder Joe Robertson said that rather than use ADUs as rentals, many people he knows use them to house elderly relatives or grown children between careers.