

The Oregonian

Portland says increasing street parking rates will free up spaces, ease congestion

By Andrew Theen

December 17, 2015

Portland's Transportation Bureau wants to increase hourly rates for its 7,619 on-street downtown parking spaces by 25 percent next month.

The City Council will vote in two weeks on the proposal to increase meter rates from \$1.60 an hour to \$2 an hour effective Jan. 29.

The increase is projected to free street parking, which officials say is increasingly difficult to come by almost everywhere downtown in the afternoon and after 7 p.m., when parking becomes free.

Drivers end up circling, officials said, increasing congestion and posing a risk to pedestrians. At least one-third of downtown traffic is caused by drivers trying to find parking, they said.

Dylan Rivera, bureau spokesman, said, ideally, drivers would find a free space in every block at any given time. The rate change is expected to lower the "occupancy level," which hovers above a desired 85 percent.

Some advocates pushed the city to raise the rate even more, arguing that street parking shouldn't be cheaper than the \$2.50 bus and light rail fare.

But Rivera said a consultant's report showed \$2 would be enough to free spaces.

The increase is expected to generate at least \$4 million in annual revenue, which will go into the bureau's general transportation revenue account.

"Increasing the price of parking has always been challenging," Commissioner Steve Novick said Wednesday during a public hearing. "But it's part of our job."

About \$1 million of the projected revenue will go into the bureau's fledgling street-paving program, Rivera said. Another \$1 million will go toward helping the bureau meet the credit card industry's protection standards. Portland is not fully meeting those standards and could face fines if bureaus don't take action, which auditors determined last year posed a concern to several bureaus.

Officials say the price increase makes sense for several reasons. The city's six SmartPark garages have 4,000 public spaces, yet street parking is cheaper. Smart Park spaces cost \$1.60 an hour the first two hours, then increase to \$1.80 for the third hour, and \$2 in the fourth hour.

If approved, hourly parking downtown will cost the same regardless of where you park.

Portland will also increase the number of 90-minute and two-hour parking zones after analyses showed hour long spaces were unnecessary. City studies showed the average downtown parker stayed for 90 minutes, and 18 percent of users stayed longer than the limit.

The change wouldn't apply to spaces in the Lloyd District or Central Eastside, or to meters planned in Northwest Portland.

The Portland Tribune

Mt. Tabor reservoirs no longer providing water

By Jim Redden

December 18, 2015

The three reservoirs in Mount Tabor are now longer providing water to customers.

The disconnection work fulfills a commitment from the City Council to the US Environmental Protection Agency to stop supplying open reservoir water to by the end the year.

Although the commitment is controversial, the disconnection work in Mount Tabor has not been met with protests. In part that is because the Water Bureau and the Mt. Tabor Neighborhood Association struck a deal for the city to maintain the historic appearance of the reservoirs and restore them to their original conditions.

As part of the deal, the council has agreed to spent \$4 million over the next five years to restore the reservoirs. The water bureau will seek \$750,000 in next year's budget to contract with a historic preservation consultant to draw up a restoration plan, which will require construction and land use permits.

The agreement between the water bureau and the neighborhood association was approved by the council in July. In marked the end of a long running battle between the council and neighborhood activists over the future of the reservoir. The EPA has adopted rules requiring that all open reservoirs be covered or disconnected from water distribution systems for health reasons.

The council has said it must comply with the rules, although activists note there have never been any health problems linked to Portland's reservoirs and ratepayers must pay hundreds of millions of dollar to comply.

As part of the transition, the council authorized the construction of a new underground water storage tank in Powell Butte. It went online in September 2014.

Willamette Week

Portland Development Commission Faces Staff Reduction

The economic development agency must trim its staff because of Mayor Charlie Hales' effort to shift money to affordable housing.

By Beth Slovic

December 16, 2015

The city's affordable-housing shortage is claiming another victim.

The Portland Development Commission announced to employees last week that it will have to reduce staff by about 20 percent in the next 10 years because the City Council has directed the economic development agency to dedicate more money to affordable housing.

This fall, the Portland City Council voted to make the PDC set aside 45 percent of urban renewal money for affordable housing, up from 30 percent. That means a bigger cut of the tax dollars the city collects in 11 urban renewal areas will be redirected to the Portland Housing Bureau, even as those tax dollars decline.

The once-flush PDC has about 95 employees and hopes to cut costs through early retirement. The commission will consider an early-retirement incentive program Dec. 16.

Shawn Uhlman, a PDC spokesman, says the agency is trying to get ahead of future shortfalls. "The need might not be immediate," he says, "but they're trying to be prudent."