

The Oregonian

NW Portland board recommends raising parking permit fee

By Elliot Njus

April 20, 2017

A committee has recommended tripling the price of an annual parking permit in Northwest Portland, an attempt to free up curb space in the cramped neighborhood.

The Northwest Parking District Stakeholder Advisory Committee voted Wednesday to endorse raising the price of a street parking permit from \$60 to \$180. The permits are available to residents, employees and visitors who meet eligibility requirements.

The decision is just one in the neighborhood's mission to confront [its parking problem](#). Another central debate is whether the city should compel developers to include parking in new multifamily projects

It also recommended capping the number of permits available to residents of apartment buildings with 30 or more units. Existing buildings would be limited to 0.6 permits per unit, while new buildings would be limited to 0.4 per unit.

There would not, however, be a cap on the number of permits overall. The area already has two valid permits for every parking spot.

The committee hopes the higher fees will encourage some residents to give up their cars in the close-in neighborhood.

The Portland Bureau of Transportation has the final say, but the bureau is expected to approve the committee recommendation.

The fee increase would low-income exemption and is expected to raise \$600,000, which the neighborhood could use on transportation improvements and incentives to reduce auto use.

Residents who have permits and choose not to renew them would be offered either a half-price annual TriMet pass or \$100 off a TriMet pass and a free one-year membership to Biketown, the city's bike-share system.

The changes would take effect Sept. 1.

Portland plans to turn 'poop into power'

By Jessica Floum

April 20, 2017

Portland plans to make money off of its sewers' fumes in a project expected to lower the city government's carbon footprint by one third by converting a noxious gas into energy.

The Portland City Council unanimously approved on Wednesday the construction of a \$9 million facility to convert methane gas in the city's sewer system into natural gas. City officials plan to sell that natural gas through a Portland-based natural gas distributor to governments and organizations looking to replace diesel fuel in cars, buses, garbage trucks and other fleets of vehicles.

"We're going to be turning poop into power," Commissioner Nick Fish said. Fish manages the Bureau of Environmental Services, which oversees the project.

Contractors will build the facility at the Columbia Boulevard Wastewater Treatment Plant, which already uses much of its methane to generate electricity and heat. Together, Portland's solid waste treatment plants use 77 percent of the sewer system's methane to generate energy, bureau director Mike Jordan said.

But the two plants can't convert the remaining 23 percent of the methane. Instead, they burn it, which emits carbon dioxide into the environment.

The new treatment facility will enable the city to convert that remaining methane into natural gas, thus creating a renewable energy source that can be used as a substitute for diesel fuel.

The new project is expected to significantly reduce the city's carbon footprint, said Bureau of Planning and Sustainability Director Susan Anderson.

"From an environmental point of view, it's not just about our local air quality," Anderson said. "It's about reducing carbon emissions. We need to walk our talk."

The city plans to sell the product for credits they will be awarded based on the volume of natural gas they sell to oil companies and other "obligated parties" required to invest in renewable energy or purchase carbon offsets under The Clean Air Act, said Paul Suto, supervising engineer at Portland's environmental services bureau.

The environmental services bureau's natural gas production is expected to bring in \$3 million to \$10 million of revenue per year, depending on the value of the credits in state and federal energy markets, bureau officials estimated.

The city could sell its credits through California's Low Credit Fuel Standard program, Suto said. Oregon has a similar program called The Clean Fuels Program.

Portland is negotiating a contract with Midwest energy assessment company Clean Energy Renewables to help make its plan work. The firm will find potential buyers, value the volume of natural gas and ultimately help monetize the city's energy credits, Suto said.

Suto said the city hopes the renewables firm will help the environmental services bureau tap into local markets. Their product could potentially replace diesel fuel in city fleets, buses and even TriMet, should the transit agency decide to shift away from biodiesel.

Bureau officials estimated they could replace enough diesel fuel to power 154 garbage trucks per year.

On Wednesday, the council also unanimously approved a \$1.9 million contract with a Portland-based natural gas company, Northwest Natural, to install and operate a station to fuel vehicles with compressed natural gas. Commissioners also approved a \$1 million contract for Northwest Natural to transport natural gas to buyers.

The unanimous votes move forward a project that Commissioner Dan Saltzman started exploring when he ran the environmental services bureau in 2008.

"I'm truly proud that today we are taking the steps to capture all that methane and put it to good use," Saltzman said.

Willamette Week

Mayor Ted Wheeler Wants Driverless Cars in Portland by Year's End

By Rachel Monahan
April 19, 2017

Mayor Ted Wheeler announced his interest in welcoming driverless cars to Portland by the end of the year.

The Portland Bureau of Transportation will begin soliciting interest from companies to test their autonomous vehicles in Portland, the mayor and Commissioner Dan Saltzman announced at a Portland Business Alliance breakfast.

"My goal is to have an autonomous vehicle pilot program in Portland, working for Portlanders, by the end of the year," says Wheeler in a statement. "To the inventors, investors and innovators, I'm here to say that Portland is open for business."

Wheeler had the backing of the Portland Business Alliance during the campaign, and last fall announced that he'd successfully recruited a division of Columbia Sportswear back from the suburbs.

The full Portland Bureau of Transportation announcement is below:

PBOT News Release:

Mayor Wheeler, Commissioner Saltzman launch Smart Autonomous Vehicles Initiative (April 19, 2017) Portland Mayor Ted Wheeler and City Commissioner Dan Saltzman today announced the Smart Autonomous Vehicles Initiative (SAVI). With this initiative, they directed the Portland Bureau of Transportation to develop autonomous vehicle policies and solicit proposals from companies that would test autonomous vehicles on Portland streets by the end of the year.

At the Portland Business Alliance's April Forum Breakfast: "The Road to Autonomous Vehicles," sponsored by Portland General Electric, Wheeler made the announcement. At a news conference after the breakfast, Wheeler and Saltzman signed a directive telling Leah Treat, director of PBOT, to launch the initiative.

"Portland's long history of transportation innovation is about to enter a new chapter," Wheeler said. "My goal is to have an autonomous vehicle pilot program in Portland, working for Portlanders, by the end of the year. To the inventors, investors and innovators, I'm here to say that Portland is open for business. By working with private industry, we can make sure that cutting edge technology expands access to public transit and reduces pollution and congestion."

It's important for autonomous vehicles to improve safety, said Saltzman, the commissioner who oversees PBOT.

"Good rules allow business and government to work together, rather than at odds," Saltzman said. "Autonomous vehicles can make our streets safer by taking human error out of the equation. As we work towards our Vision Zero goal of ending traffic fatalities and serious injuries, the public has a right to expect that the city will help make sure that safety standards are met. Autonomous vehicles should help us meet our safety, equity, climate change and economic goals."

In crafting this initiative, we will build on the experience and know-how we gained as a finalist in the USDOT's Smart City challenge last year, said Treat, the director of PBOT.

"This directive sets the framework for making smart choices about emerging technology," Treat said. "Realizing the potential of autonomous vehicles starts with making smart choices and setting clear standards that support the interests of the autonomous vehicle industry and our community. We will look to the first autonomous vehicle pilots for valuable information about the performance of AVs and how we can harness this technology to increase affordable transportation, reduce congestion and fight pollution."

The directive tells PBOT to take four actions to advance SAVI within the next 60 days:

- 1. Propose for City Council and public consideration Interim Transportation System Plan (TSP) policies that ensure connected and autonomous vehicles will serve Portland's safety, equity, climate change, and economic goals;*
- 2. Publish a Request for Information (RFI) that invites AV testing specific to advancing safety, equity, climate, and economic goals;*
- 3. Adopt an Interim Administrative Rule that provides a clear path to permit innovators to apply to test, pilot or deploy AVs in Portland; and*
- 4. Develop public engagement, reporting, and evaluation plans that ensure Portland residents, workers, and businesses have opportunities to shape the "rules of the road" for AVs in Portland.*

Portland General Electric (NYSE: POR), the largest electric utility in the metropolitan area, said the initiative could help grow the local economy and reduce emissions with electric vehicles.

"Evolving our transportation infrastructure is one of the great challenges, and the great opportunities, we face in the Portland region," said Charlie Allcock, Business Development Director for Portland General Electric. "The transportation sector contributes over 40 percent of greenhouse gas emissions here in Oregon. And increased traffic and congestion could put a damper on economic growth. We applaud Mayor Wheeler's decision to make Portland a mecca for innovative solutions and new jobs, and will work closely with the city area as we move towards a smart, shared, self-driving and emission-free transportation future."

The Portland announcement was praised by Transportation for America, a Washington, D.C.-based alliance of elected, business and civic leaders from communities across the country that advocates for investment in smart, homegrown, locally-driven transportation solutions.

"Autonomous vehicles have the potential to reshape our cities, and we're excited to see that Portland is taking proactive steps to ensure that this coming transformation in urban mobility is harnessed effectively to move them closer to their economic, safety, equity and environmental goals," said Russ Brooks, Director of Smart Cities for Transportation for America. "Portland's commitment to engaging the public to shape this future together should be a model for other cities. And their push to work together with other local, regional and state leaders to flesh out state legislation that works for cities should be a model for the federal government as they progress toward making national policy for autonomous vehicles."

The Portland Mercury

Following Renovations, Mayor Ted Wheeler Ratchets Up City Hall Security

By Dirk VanderHart
April 19, 2017

After more than a month in the musty old Portland Building, Portland City Council hearings made a triumphant return to their home in City Hall this morning. And, boy, things have changed.

The official reason for holding meetings across the road since early March was that the city needed to install new audio/video equipment in council chambers (it did! and now no one knows how the work the microphones). But it turns out officials also took the opportunity to tweak City Hall protocols as well.

After protests, fits of cursing, symbolic funerals, and all manner of other demonstrations at council meetings this year, security at City Hall is the tightest it's been under at least the last three mayors.

The first thing members of the public noticed when approaching the building this morning: Two double doors at the entrance had been marked off with cones, and contract security guards were ushering people through one of two doors—left for city employees, right for the public.

Waiting beyond those first two guards? Two more—these ones there to check your bag for weapons and/or contraband.

The security guards this morning were uniformly courteous, and informed me that this was the new norm at Portland City Hall. The bag check procedures will remain in effect from Monday through Friday (they began last week, according to a city spokesperson).

And that's not all.

Council chambers today was outfitted with a new velvet rope meant to dissuade members of the public from approaching council members (you know, like to [give them a Pepsi](#)). And someone had built new barriers near each side of the council dais. Pictures below:

Lastly, Mayor Ted Wheeler has apparently made the decision not to let people use the balcony in council chambers—typically opened up when the size of the crowd fills the main level. Instead, the city has an overflow space across the hall streaming the meeting on a television screen.

"For the time being, the balcony will remained closed," Wheeler spokesperson Michael Cox tells us.

None of this is exactly unexpected. In his attempts to grapple with mounting outbursts at council Wheeler has pushed new, [potentially unconstitutional exclusion rules](#) and has even flirted with the notion of [admission tickets](#) to council meetings. And the mayor's not wrong when he points out, with increasing frequency, that the interruptions drag out council meetings into all-day affairs.

As [we've reported](#), the demonstrations have become worrisome to some City Hall staffers. According to the Oregonian, [one of Commissioner Nick Fish's employees even retired](#) because of them.

Still, it's worth noting that this is the most stringent security that City Hall has seen in years.

Bryant Enge, the director of the Bureau of Internal Business Services, said today he couldn't remember a time when guards checked people's bags at the entrance, though he stressed he'd have to check to make sure it was never a practice. Certainly there wasn't such a policy under former mayors Sam Adams and Charlie Hales.

(Hales, caught up in the fervor of civic brotherhood early in his term, even removed turnstiles that used to pause members of the public at the building's main entrance.)

And security might grow tighter still. The city is in the midst of picking a private consultant to "develop a detailed Security Master Plan for the city." It received 11 bids for the contract, and is currently picking between a West Linn company and a firm from Maryland.

But let's also consider the real question: Has the new security helped calm things down?

Not today it didn't.

Following a familiar pattern, shouting erupted from the audience during an item related to the Rose Festival, leading to Wheeler ejecting one person and clearing the chambers when a woman began shouting profanity at him. Eventually, officers arrested the woman, Danialle Johnson, in the hallway outside of chambers. She was booked on a charge of criminal trespass. [Whether that charge will stick is unclear.](#)

Daily Journal of Commerce

UD+P pays \$200,000 in relocation fees

By Chuck Slothower

April 20, 2017

Urban Development + Partners became the first developer to pay relocation fees to evicted tenants this spring under Portland's emergency housing ordinance, and principal Eric Cress said the situation was an example of "no good deed goes unpunished."

UD+P purchased the Fairmount Hotel, a Northwest Portland apartment building dating to 1904, in October 2015 for \$5.2 million with an eye toward redeveloping the structure. Cress said UD+P kept the tenants in place, despite modest rental income, out of a sense of compassion for renters in Portland's tight apartment market.

"We held the building and left it occupied ... out of goodwill," Cress said. "Of course, that was probably a mistake. We probably should have vacated it earlier."

Instead UD+P waited, and was forced to pay relocation fees after the Portland City Council in February passed an emergency ordinance requiring property owners to pay relocation costs when evicting tenants without cause.

The tab: \$199,800 to issue no-cause evictions for 65 units.

The relocation fees must be paid directly to tenants prior to the effective date of eviction. Landlords have sued to stop the ordinance. The case was argued April 6, but the judge has yet to issue a decision.

Most of the Fairmount's tenants were able to find new places to live fairly quickly, Cress said.

"Pretty much everyone has found other living situations," he said.

In future cases, relocation fees likely will be paid by sellers, in order to deliver buildings ready for development, Cress said.

A few tenants remain in the building. Work on the project will begin in the next few weeks, Cress said. The project is expected to wrap up in March 2018.

UD+P initially offered to pay relocation fees before the ordinance passed, but Cress said the firm offered lower amounts than those required by Portland's new ordinance. Fees range from \$2,900 to vacate a studio apartment to \$4,500 for a three-bedroom or larger unit.

Payment is required when issuing a no-cause eviction after tenancy of six months or more. Tenants may also demand relocation fees prior to moving out if the landlord raises the rent by 10 percent or more within a 12-month period.

The ordinance unanimously passed the City Council after a push from newly elected Commissioner Chloe Eudaly. The emergency ordinance is just one of several measures intended to ease the city's declared housing emergency.

Eudaly's spokesman, David Austin, said the relocation ordinance seems to be working as intended.

"Landlords and property owners have choices they can make," Austin said. "But simply putting people out on the street for no reason without compensation can create a lot of duress for the city. We're glad to see in a case like this that the renters are being protected."

Rehabilitation of the historic, 40,175-square-foot building at 1920 N.W. 26th Ave. will yield approximately 80 units. The building will be given a new roof and modern electrical and plumbing systems.

"It's badly deteriorated," Cress said. The project will be a complete restoration, he added.

UD+P will directly oversee construction. The project is being designed by Michael Flowers Architect Inc.

"It's a beautiful old building," Cress said. "I think it'll be an asset to the neighborhood."

The Portland Business Journal

Mayor to autonomous-vehicle developers: Come test in Portland!

*By Pete Danko
April 19, 2017*

Portland Mayor [Ted Wheeler](#) and Transportation Commissioner [Dan Saltzman](#) want autonomous-vehicle developers to test their wares on the city's streets.

The two, along with Transportation Bureau director [Leah Treat](#), unveiled a "Smart Autonomous Vehicles Initiative" on Wednesday, aiming to position the city on the cutting edge of the new technology's development and implementation.

"My goal is to have an autonomous vehicle pilot in the city of Portland, working for Portlanders, in 2017," the mayor said.

The three leaders said autonomous vehicles hold the promise to improve safety, boost access to transportation, reduce congestion and help the city reach its climate goals.

"Autonomous vehicles can make our streets safer by taking human error out of the equation," Saltzman said. "As we work toward our Vision Zero goal of ending traffic fatalities and serious

injuries, the public has a right to expect that the city will help make sure that safety standards are met.”

To bring testing to the city, they plan to solicit developers, set up an application and permitting process and develop a means for public input on “rules of the road.”

How much of a lure the city will be for developers, at least in the near term, is unclear.

At a [Portland Business Alliance](#) breakfast panel that preceded the announcement, [Josh Hartung](#), CEO of PolySync, a Portland company developing a software platform for autonomous vehicles, said testing now “is happening where innovation is happening” — and that’s not Portland.

“Portland is not a leader in this area,” he said.

Hartung also said Portland’s weather, roads and terrain — compared to, for example, Arizona, where Uber has done testing — would make it a bigger challenge for developers. That might dissuade some companies, but could make Portland “an excellent stepping stone” once a developer is confident enough to take on the complexity.

The mayor said the request for information the city planned to put out would reveal whether companies were eager to come to Portland. He added that preliminary discussions with private companies through the Smart City Challenge — [where the city was one of seven finalists nationally](#)— suggested there would be interest.

OPB

Portland Votes 'Yes' On Plan To Turn Poop Into Vehicle Fuel

*By Amelia Templeton
April 19, 2017*

For years, the sewage flushed away by Portland households has decomposed into methane gas captured by the city’s wastewater plant and turned into energy and electricity.

Now, the city’s wastewater agency, the Bureau of Environmental Services, has a new plan for the gas that’s produced by your solid waste.

It plans to convert the methane into renewable natural gas and sell it as fuel for trucks and buses, with the help of Northwest Natural Gas. The bureau says it can produce enough natural gas in a year to power the equivalent of 154 garbage trucks.

Portland City Council approved the proposal as an emergency measure in a unanimous vote Wednesday.

‘Poop Into Power’

“When I told my 13 year old about it, he said I should explain it this way: We’re going to be turning poop into power,” said Nick Fish, the commissioner who oversees environmental services.

The Bureau of Environmental Services is touting the project as a major “triple bottom line” win that produces environmental, social and economic benefits.

The agency says the natural gas produced by Portland's waste will replace diesel fuel, cutting emissions by 20,000 metric tons of carbon dioxide — more than any other city project to date. It would also reduce particulate pollution.

Local climate change experts said transportation fuel is a smart way to reuse waste methane gas, but added the city's carbon savings claims could be inflated.

At present, the Columbia Boulevard Wastewater Treatment Plant produces an average 600 million cubic feet of biogas, primarily methane.

Bacteria that breaks down solid waste in giant tanks produces methane, a particularly harmful greenhouse gas.

The treatment plant currently recovers about 77 percent of the methane. It's used to heat boilers and generate electricity on site, and some of the gas is sold to Malarkey Roofing Company to power its manufacturing processes.

The remaining 23 percent is flared through waste gas burners, releasing carbon dioxide into the atmosphere.

The new proposal will capture and reuse 100 percent of the methane produced at the treatment plant, according to BES.

A \$9 Million Price Tag

Repurposing the gas will cost roughly \$9 million. The agency will start by building a processing facility to convert the methane into renewable natural gas and an on-site RNG fueling station by the end of this year.

Next year, BES will build a pipe connecting its facility to Northwest Natural's natural gas distribution system.

There aren't currently local buyers for natural gas as a transportation fuel, so in the short term the bureau plans to sell the gas to a company — Clean Energy Renewables — which will resell it on the national market.

The company has agreed to use a system known as traceable credits to guarantee the natural gas is used as a vehicle fuel.

“Those credits allow us to get a premium price for the product, and they allow us to ensure that it displaces diesel fuel and goes into the transportation sector,” said Michael Jordan, the director of the Bureau of Environmental Services.

The bureau is in the process of converting some of its vehicles to run on renewable natural gas. In the long run, the agency hopes to sell its RNG locally as fleets convert from diesel to RNG.

BES estimates the project will pay for itself within three to eight years, and after that will generate income for the agency and its ratepayers.

Praise and Questions

Vivek Shandas, a professor of Urban Studies at PSU who focuses on sustainability, had both praise and questions about the project. “Methane is a particularly potent greenhouse gas, so as much of it as we can capture is probably a good thing,” said Shandas.

He said the renewable natural gas project involves proven technology shown to have a good return on investment.

Shandas also said engineers have come up with a variety of ways to convert or retrofit diesel engines so they can run on natural gas. A pilot project at the Port of Seattle [recently converted](#) four diesel container shipping trucks to run on compressed natural gas.

But Shandas was skeptical of the claim that it's the city's single greatest effort to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. "Arguably, we've done more with the urban growth boundary, with a number of density policies," he said, "than we have with any single win, any single project like this."

Shandas also pointed to the Bureau of Environmental Services' existing projects developing green infrastructure like rain gardens and bioswales for both reducing emissions and mitigating the effects of climate change.

"This is a wastewater treatment proposal. Yes, it has a climate component. To bill this as a climate proposal, I think is taking this pretty far," he said.

Andrew Rice, a professor of physics at PSU who studies emissions, said it was hard to assess BES's emissions reductions claims without more detailed information. But he said it appeared at first glance to be a generous estimate.

"If you assume the project's output will be 100,000-340,000 dekatherms per year, as they state, the resulting range of carbon reductions is 5000-19,000 metric tons CO₂," Rice said.

What We Know About Portland's Investigation Into Uber And Greyball

*By Amelia Templeton
April 18, 2017*

Portland's City Council met in private Tuesday to discuss the city's legal strategy for regulating the so-called sharing economy as companies such as Airbnb, VRBO, Uber and Lyft have rapidly expanded in the Portland market.

Reporters are barred from describing what takes place in council executive sessions. Outside of the session, Commissioner Dan Saltzman, who oversees the transportation bureau, shared an update on the city's ongoing investigation into Uber.

"Our focus is on whether they've intentionally misled us as a regulator and whether they're discriminating against people based upon where they live," said Saltzman.

Saltzman and Mayor Ted Wheeler launched an investigation of Uber in March, after [the New York Times alleged the company had used software called Greyball](#) to evade regulators in cities where it launched without permission.

Uber used a range of techniques to spot people they believed were government workers trying to hail rides, and then, in effect, jammed the Uber app on their phones to display ghost cars that didn't really exist, according to the New York Times.

Saltzman said the Bureau of Transportation (PBOT) will conclude its investigation into Greyball on April 28. He'd initially promised to finish it within 30 days, but Uber has asked for more time to answer questions, he said.

Here's what we know about the scope of the transportation bureau's investigation into Greyball:

1. Waiting On Key Documents

PBOT and the city's attorneys are still waiting on key documents and information from Uber. The city agreed to give the company until Friday to respond.

"Through conversations with their attorneys and our attorneys, we have agreed upon this Friday as the drop-dead date for them to provide us with the information we needed," said Saltzman.

Saltzman said he believes the company is negotiating in good faith to get the city information.

By contrast, Commissioner Nick Fish has been openly skeptical of whether Uber will voluntarily participate in an investigation into its own business practices.

"I want to make sure that we're being assertive in getting the answers to those questions. And that may include bringing a lawsuit or issuing a subpoena," he said in an interview.

2. Even More Key: The Playbook

Among the documents the city is seeking but hasn't received from the company is a playbook Uber created to illustrate how the Greyball software could be used to evade regulation. Here's [how the New York Times described](#) that document when it broke the story of the Greyball program:

[...] Greyballing started as a way to scramble the locations of UberX drivers to prevent competitors from finding them. Uber said that was still the tool's primary use.

But as Uber moved into new markets, its engineers saw that the same methods could be used to evade law enforcement. Once the Greyball tool was put in place and tested, Uber engineers created a playbook with a list of tactics and distributed it to general managers in more than a dozen countries on five continents.

3. Is Greyball Still Being Used In Portland?

Saltzman has asked whether Greyball, also known as VOTS, or violation of terms of service, is still being used in Portland — potentially for reasons apart from evading regulators.

The company has been asked if at any time up until the present it has used the software "to detect government officials, regulators, or any other persons seeking to use the Uber application whom Uber wanted to screen out."

4. A Closer Look At Uber Drivers

PBOT is also reviewing its inspections of Uber drivers. The city's regulatory staff has conducted 850 field audits on Lyft drivers and 1,460 field audits on Uber drivers since 2015, when the city struck a deal that allowed the companies to launch legally in Portland.

PBOT has asked the companies to provide more demographic information about the drivers regulators audited in the past. The city would use that information to confirm they weren't given handpicked drivers to pass inspections.

5. What Uber Could Face

Saltzman says he's not considering a lawsuit against the company. But based on the outcome of the investigation, Uber could face fines up to and including the suspension of its operating permit in Portland.