

The Oregonian

Portland to create ‘equitable mobility’ task force to investigate how to charge people to use local roads

By Andrew Theen

July 10, 2019

Portland City Council approved a plan Wednesday to study short-and-long-term strategies to charge people to use city streets, an effort intended to reduce congestion and curb carbon emissions as the region expects as many as 500,000 new residents by 2040.

The city will create a Pricing for Equitable Mobility task force to study and recommend potential road user fees – such as cordons, where drivers are charged to use certain streets in the city center or potentially more robust freeway tolls in the area. The task force will meet later this year and is expected to offer initial recommendations in summer 2020 and final recommendations in the spring of 2021.

Commissioner Chloe Eudaly, who oversees the transportation bureau, said the city must take bold steps to try and get people out of their cars.

“We are going the wrong direction on transportation,” she said, adding that 42% of Portland’s carbon emissions come from transportation sources. Portland and Multnomah County have the goal of transitioning 100% to renewable energy sources by 2050.

What strategies are on the table are still up for debate, but likely options include cordon pricing, a potential fee for Uber and Lyft fares, more demand-based parking pricing, and potentially a local fee to charge drivers based on how many miles they drive.

The vote comes nearly two years after the council urged the city to create a comprehensive congestion pricing and demand strategy. The Legislature in 2017 also kickstarted a plan to study whether and how to charge drivers on Interstate 5 and 205 in the Portland area. The state has since applied for tolling approval from the federal government.

Advocates like Jillian Detweiler, executive director of the nonprofit transportation organization The Street Trust, said the city already knew what it must do – and that’s offer incentives to get people out of cars and onto bikes or transit.

“This can’t wait,” she said of the pricing plan, adding it took 20 months to get to the point of creating a task force. Other supporters urged the city to act sooner, saying growing traffic congestion poses a health risk to young people here.

The task force is expected to include diverse voices from transit-dependent groups and organizations representing communities of color, folks who, city officials say, already shoulder an undue burden in commuting times because they’ve been forced to relocate to farther flung neighborhoods.

Chris Warner, Portland’s transportation director, said the city was seeing an increase in carbon emissions in recent years, not a decrease. Those emissions rose 6.4% last year, Warner said, and are up 8% since 1990.

“We have to reduce the amount we drive alone,” he told the council. Portland hopes its alliance with Bloomberg Philanthropies’ Climate Challenge, of which it is one of 25 cities chosen, will help the city “augment and accelerate” its near-term climate reduction goals.

Portland has studied how other major cities -- like London, Stockholm and Singapore -- have started charging drivers to use city roads or drive into sections of the city.

Charging people to drive works, according to the city's research. But it's important to have a solid plan in place, access to transit and tailor the pricing strategy to the region.

Portland's challenge is intensified because unlike many other larger cities, the bulk of commuters who drive alone into downtown and close-in neighborhoods for work in the Rose City aren't wealthy. PBOT officials said 65% of peak car commuters in Portland are medium or low-income, so finding out how to charge users to drive is a tricky issue.

Noah Siegel, PBOT's interim deputy director, said Portland couldn't make whatever fees it settles on for drivers punitive. "It's really about freeing people from sitting in traffic in their cars," he told the council.

In other cities that have adopted road usage fees or cordon pricing schemes they've accompanied those programs with spending more on transit to give people an option. "Where this has happened, there's been dramatic investment in transit across the board," Siegel said.

The challenge is significant, given that even if the city sees grand successes, additional car trips are expected to more double in the next decade.

In 2020, the Metro regional government is expected to put a mammoth transportation investment plan on the ballot, too. That project list could total in billions of dollars.

Portland's pricing task force is just one leg of a three-legged stool of government agencies pursuing ways to charge people to get around the region.

ODOT is pursuing the federal highway tolls, which would likely charge drivers a variable fee depending on when they are on the freeway. Metro regional government is leading a broader analysis of what policies the region should have in place, taking a closer look at the cordon issue, roader user fees, freeway tolls, charging drivers on "high-volume" streets and ways to beef up parking prices.

Art project on I-205 pedestrian bridge caught in bureaucratic limbo is spared 'restoration'

By Andrew Theen

July 10, 2019

Just after midnight on June 3, Amy Hoffmann stood on what had always been a drab concrete pedestrian bridge spanning Interstate 205 in her Lents neighborhood.

The Southeast Steele Street footbridge is a vital part of the Portland neighborhood's daytime life, as parents and kids shuffle back and forth across the freeway to Oliver P. Lent School just east of the torrent of traffic. Hoffmann said she would never normally go to the pedestrian bridge at night. But she had to see it this night, so she snuck out without her waking her husband and kids.

"It did not feel dark and scary at all," Hoffmann said. "It was such a magical moment."

Hours earlier, Hoffmann and more than 60 neighborhood residents of all ages spent the day injecting life into the sad, utilitarian structure encased by a chain-link arch-like roof. They painted chickens, bees, hearts, quotes from Malcolm X and Kanye West, an homage to the nearby Portland Pickles baseball team and more amid a backdrop of bright warm colors.

The volunteer-led project, funded through hundreds of dollars in donations from the neighborhood and area business, wrapped up six hours later. The Pickles donated coffee and mascot Dillon the Pickle and some players helped paint.

Then on July 3, the email from Oregon Department of Transportation officials arrived, demanding Hoffmann “restore all unpermitted painted areas back to previous conditions.” The state gave her until July 10 to paint the bridge gray again.

“If there is any unpermitted art work after ODOT’s restoration, it can result in legal action,” the state wrote.

Hoffmann knew her project didn’t have a permit, but she says that’s only because she finally gave up and decided to pursue a “guerrilla art” project after nearly three years of trying to navigate the state’s onerous permitting system. At points in the past two years in particular, she’d felt progress was nigh, but then state officials who knew of her application moved on to other posts, and Hoffmann said she had to start from scratch. She said she met with city officials, who referred her to the state, and state officials who said she needed an intergovernmental agreement between the two entities. Hoffmann said she was also told the volunteer painting project, which is not visible from the freeway below, needed federal approval to proceed.

She tweaked the project and submitted a new application to focus on sprucing up the stairs leading up to the bridge and not the bridge itself.

None of it seemed to matter. She felt like she hit a brick wall of state and local bureaucracy.

She’d finally had enough: The project would move forward without a permit.

Then last week the nitpicking began. She was told to remove the Portland Pickles reference because it was a corporate entity. She was told to cover graffiti on the bridge’s walls.

ODOT said its art rules were consistent: “ODOT has a few locations where the process has worked to realize the community’s desires for art balanced with ODOT’s requirements for safety and maintenance,” spokesman Don Hamilton said in an email.

Hoffmann found the state’s sudden interest in the bridge’s appearance amusing.

Her husband gifted her a stiff broom after the couple moved to the surrounding neighborhood in August 2016 because she frequently took to sweeping broken glass from the urban eyesore because state officials didn’t. She now has an Adopt-A-Highway agreement to maintain the area but admits it’s tough to keep up. The bridge runs perpendicular to the I-205 multi-use path, a place like many in Portland these days where homeless campers and trash are common sights.

On a trip to the bridge this week, this reporter found graffiti, discarded clothing, and trash on the ground on the bridge and on the approaches to it. On the western side of the bridge, charred bushes line one side of a staircase to the bridge, remnants Hoffmann said, of a firecracker incident a year ago.

After questions from The Oregonian/OregonLive, the state this week said it would no longer require the walls be painted by July 10, extending the deadline to July 31 “to bring resolution to this initiative.”

“ODOT understands that this project is a good neighborhood project that should be able to meet all requirements for public art on ODOT property in collaboration with the City of Portland’s support,” Hamilton said in an email. He said the state “wholeheartedly supports this community initiative in promoting neighborhood pride.”

He said the state typically required an “intergovernmental agreement outlining maintenance roles and responsibilities,” because “we know that graffiti and other forms of vandalism are not uncommon.” The state said it is waiting on signatures from the city and Hoffmann’s group to “ensure maintenance responsibilities are clearly defined and carried out.”

According to documents, Hoffman already adopted the bridge. Her permit application calls for litter removal and minor landscape maintenance. The document indicates the state will provide paint to cover the graffiti. Her agreement runs through March 19, 2020.

Dylan Rivera, a Portland transportation spokesman, said the city supported efforts like Hoffmann’s to “paint or otherwise beautify public assets.”

“These projects are a great way for neighbors to come together, connect with each other and create something that enriches their community,” he said.

Rivera said the city wouldn’t be responsible for maintenance. It never was to begin with, since the footbridge is state property.

When told of the state’s new extension, Hoffmann called it “wonderful news” and she said the standoff was about more than a permit.

“I believe that we can work together to not only save this incredible project, but to make the permitting process more accessible for other communities who wish to engage in placemaking activities on ODOT-managed structures and properties, communities that, by virtue of their location are disproportionately challenged to do so,” she said.

She also hopes to install 26 painted panels on the steps leading up to the bridge on the westside, colorful designs she and neighbors already painted years ago. They’ve been sitting in storage. She’s still waiting for the permit.

The Portland Tribune

Sources: Threats of violence now just part of job, Wheeler says

*By Jim Redden
July 11, 2019*

Plus, both protest sides think Wheeler is conspiring against them and newest homeless count figures coming out later than usual

During his Monday news conference, Mayor Ted Wheeler said he and his family receive so many threats these days, he wonders what else is going on in the world when he doesn't hear of a new one first thing in the morning.

Wheeler spoke to reporters Monday, July 8, about the international controversy generated over the violence during the dueling downtown protests last Saturday.

While deploring the violence and promising to find solutions, Wheeler also said he, his wife and his daughter are routinely threatened with violence and even death — and so are other city officials on a regular basis.

They include threats against the entire City Council, Wheeler said. He blamed those who issue threats on the current political divide in the country and insisted they are not preventing him and the rest of the council from doing their jobs.

"I'm taking them in stride. Part of the job is people threatening to kill me, my wife, my daughter, and blow up City Hall," Wheeler said almost in passing.

Both sides see conspiracies

Mayor Ted Wheeler is being accused of favoring both sides in the ongoing dueling protests that frequently turn violent.

Left-wing protesters previously demanded that Wheeler resign because they believe the police have sided with right-wing Patriot Prayer protesters against anti-fascist, or "antifa," counter-protesters. And now Multnomah County Republican Party Chair James Buchal has accused Wheeler of supporting the counter-protesters.

Buchal, a lawyer who plans to represent Patriot Prayer leader Joey Gibson, recently told the Portland Mercury "(the Multnomah County Republicans) have a continuous concern that the city administration, specifically our police commissioner Ted Wheeler, is attempting to turn antifa into a paramilitary wing of the local government. We have made clear our views of the kind of public disorder the (Wheeler) administration seems to encourage."

Homeless count later than usual

The 2019 homeless figures for Multnomah County may not be released until August at the earliest. That is much later than when the most recent figures were released in June 2017.

The federally required Point in Time homeless count is conducted every two years in Multnomah County. Preliminary figures for the 2017 count were released in June of that year, with the full report being released in October 2017. But according to the Joint Office of Homeless Services, the release of the 2019 numbers may slip to August 2019.

One reason is because the joint office is not working with Portland State University on the count this year, like it did in 2017. Instead, the Portland-Multnomah County office hired a data analyst to do the job this time.

The most recent counts released by other West Coast cities this year show their homeless populations have increased substantially.

Task force to recommend Portland street tolls

By Jim Redden

July 11, 2019

City Council approves appointment of advisory group to help develop policy to discourage driving

The City Council approved the appointment of an advisory group to help the Portland Bureau of Transportation develop a plan to charge motorists to drive on some streets and bridges to reduce congestion and greenhouse gas emissions on Wednesday, July 10.

The Pricing for Equitable Mobility task force is expected to begin meeting later this year and offer preliminary recommendations in the summer 2020 and final recommendations in the spring of 2021.

"Both the population and congestion are growing in the City of Portland. With this growth comes increased costs of congestion. There are economic costs to businesses and individuals, negative health impacts, and carbon pollution. Low-income communities and communities of color are often most negatively and disproportionately impacted by these hidden costs of congestion," said an impact statement accompanying the resolution approved by the council.

The appointment will be part of ongoing city, regional and state efforts to reduce congestion and emissions. According to the resolution, other cities around the world are successfully using road tolls to manage traffic and emissions.

"[P]ricing for mobility, the practice of pricing road use according to demand, has reduced congestion and vehicle emissions in cities around the world and is now being implemented in New York, and considered in Seattle, Los Angeles, Vancouver, and other North American cities," it reads.

The resolution does not designate specific streets or bridges, or suggest exact tolls to be charged. They are expected to eventually be recommended to the council by PBOT for approval.

The Oregon Department of Transportation is also working to toll portions of I-5 and I-215 in the Portland area to reduce congestion and emissions, and to generate revenue for improvement projects.

[You can read the resolution here.](#)

Willamette Week

Portland City Council Will Urge City Attorneys to Advocate for Pro-Choice Court Rulings, From Afar

*By Sophie Peel
July 10, 2019*

Commissioner Jo Ann Hardesty hopes city attorneys can woo judges in Alabama and Ohio.

As states across the nation see a wave of increasingly strict anti-abortion legislation being passed, a Portland official is seeking to stunt the restrictions however possible—even from afar.

Portland City Commissioner Jo Ann Hardesty introduced a city resolution on Wednesday urging Portland city attorneys to submit written testimony to ongoing abortion appellate cases in two other states to sway the court in favor of pro-choice case rulings.

The two states are Alabama and Ohio, which have both trail-blazed harsher abortion restrictions in the past several years.

The resolution would encourage city attorneys to file what are called "amicus briefs," submissions to the court that provide additional information, perspective or expertise on appellate cases.

Judges presiding over the cases are not obligated to take filed briefs into account when reaching a decision.

In a rare win for pro-choice advocates in Alabama last week, the Supreme Court declined to hear an appeal from the state that would revive a ban on abortions performed more than 15 weeks after conception. The idea for the ban initially was blocked by the lower courts in 2016, but

recently experienced a revival. The southern state's abortion laws are some of the harshest in the nation.

Ohio's heartbeat law, which was supposed to take effect this week and would ban abortions after a heartbeat could first be detected, was blocked by a judge on July 3.

"We've seen first-hand the devastation that comes when abortions are not legal, safe, and accessible," Hardesty said in a statement. "I'm calling on us as a city to hold the line here and ask other progressive cities to join us in defending reproductive rights throughout the country."

The resolution was co-created by Hardesty and pro-choice advocacy group NARAL Pro-Choice Oregon, where Hardesty was once a board member. Several grassroots groups will attend the council meeting and provide testimony in support of the bill.

"As we face unprecedented attacks on abortion care throughout the United States, it is imperative that our local leaders make it clear that abortion is healthcare and the right to decide when and if to have children is fundamental and unassailable," said Grayson Dempsey, Director of the pro-choice group.

Attorneys who file amicus briefs are, by definition, not legally involved in the case that they're supplying information for. The term translates to "friend of the court" and can be highly subjective—briefs are usually filed by remote attorneys who have strong opinions on cases they're not directly involved in.

Hardesty's statement explains that "the resolution also directs the City Attorneys to build a coalition of city attorneys from throughout the country to tackle other already passed or forthcoming anti-abortion laws."

The resolution is co-sponsored by all members of City Council, and should pass unanimously this afternoon.

The Portland Mercury

Portland City Council Passes Resolution to Support Nationwide Abortion Access

*By Blair Stenvick
July 10, 2019*

The Portland City Council voted unanimously Wednesday to pass a resolution condemning recent anti-abortion legislation passed in other states, and cementing Portland's status as one of the leading cities in the country for abortion rights and access.

"We are about to do something that I believe is historic," said Commissioner Jo Ann Hardesty, who introduced the resolution at a press conference held before Wednesday's afternoon council session. "It is very important, here and now, in this moment in time we are living in."

In April and May of this year, several state legislatures passed laws that either outright banned or severely limited abortion access. Oregon has long been recognized as being one of the best states in the country for abortion access—just last year, Oregonians strongly voted down a ballot measure that would have restricted public funding for abortions—and Hardesty said she sees it as Oregonians' duty to not "rest on our laurels" and instead work to secure abortion access for all Americans.

The resolution directs Portland's city attorneys to file amicus briefs in any future lawsuits challenging anti-abortion legislation. (Amicus briefs are informal, "friend of the court" legal support documents that can be filed by interested parties.) It specifically mentions laws in Alabama and Ohio as examples of anti-abortion legislation: In May, Alabama's state government passed a bill outlawing abortion at every stage of pregnancy, while in April, Ohio passed a bill banning abortion after a detectable fetal heartbeat (about six weeks). Both of those laws have since been struck down in court.

"The City of Portland unequivocally condemns any attempt to restrict, prohibit, or otherwise impede access to safe and legal abortion care," the resolution reads. "Access to safe and legal abortion services is vital to the health of people who can become pregnant and our broader community.... The City of Portland remains committed to eliminating stigma surrounding abortion so that every person in our city who makes the choice to access safe and legal abortion care will feel supported, welcome, and safe doing so."

Hardesty said she was "thrilled to be part of a city council where the mayor and every single council member has signed on to say, 'No, this is not acceptable.'"

The resolution also directs Portland's city attorneys to build a coalition of attorneys from other cities that have strong abortion access, so they can file amicus briefs and provide further legal support in the future if necessary.

City Council devoted about an hour of time to the resolution, which included invited testimony from NARAL Pro-Choice Oregon, Asian Pacific American Network of Oregon (APANO), Forward Together, and other organizations that support Hardesty's resolution.

That included testimony from Beth Vial, a board member of the Northwest Abortion Access Fund (NWAAF), which raises money to help people who cannot afford to cover the costs of their abortion. Vial spoke with the Mercury last year about her own experience having to travel outside of the state for an abortion, because she did not learn she was pregnant until her third trimester. From that story:

Third-trimester abortion is legal in Oregon, but neither Planned Parenthood nor the Lovejoy Abortion Clinic in Portland offer the procedure for women as far along in their pregnancy as Vial, because risk of the procedure causing physical harm to the patient rises dramatically after 24 weeks. A doctor at Oregon Health & Science University recommended Vial instead go to a clinic in Albuquerque, New Mexico, that provides abortions for patients who are up to 28 weeks pregnant.

The abortion alone—not counting airfare, lodging, food, and the cost of taking two weeks off work—would cost Vial \$10,500. Her insurance company offered to reimburse her \$200.

"That gave me two weeks to compile the resources to travel down there, have a place to stay, feed myself, and then pay the deposit for the procedure," she said.

Vial ended up getting help from friends, as well as from the NWAAF and other organizations to pay for her procedure. As a white middle-class woman, Vial says she felt more privileged than many in her position; she is now a NWAAF board member and volunteer.

In testimony submitted to City Council, Vial pointed out that New York City recently made a \$250,000 investment in its local abortion fund, and called on Portland to do the same.

"The details of my story are rare, but the experience of having to travel outside of Oregon for abortion care is not uncommon," Vial said. "I learned that legislation isn't everything and rights don't always equal access.... Last week when I shared my story at an event in Seattle,

Congresswoman Pramila Jayapal from Washington State indicated that she would like to see that same type of investment made in New York made in the Northwest. I, on behalf of Northwest Abortion Access Fund, would like to request the same of you.”

Hardesty didn't give a direct answer when asked by the Mercury if there are plans for the city of Portland to contribute to the NWAAF, but did say she “would hope all Portlanders would step up on this,” by making private donations or volunteering to keep abortion legal and accessible for all.

All four City Council members present voted in favor of the resolution; Commissioner Amanda Fritz was absent from the meeting because she is on vacation.

The Portland Observer

On Police Response to Protests

July 10, 2019

Letter to the Editor

Editor's note: The following is an open letter to Portland Police Chief Outlaw and Mayor Wheeler from members of Portland Copwatch:

We are very concerned about the police and city's response to the protests on Saturday, June 29.

One primary concern is the statement which came from Daryl Turner at the Portland Police Association asking that you take the "handcuffs" off of the rank-and-file officers so they can act with "strong and swift enforcement action." This echoes the highly inaccurate complaints by those who wanted the US to step up its violent attacks in Southeast Asia saying that the Vietnam War was fought with "one hand tied behind our backs."

We appreciate that the mayor took time to call out the PPA's comments as false and misleading. However, when he says he condemns violence, it rings hollow when essentially saying the police get to decide how to attack demonstrators. The state, we've noted before, declares a monopoly on violence

Secondly there is the issue of the unsubstantiated rumors about quick drying cement being put into milkshakes that were thrown. But according to one article, adding such a substance into a sugary drink would chemically negate the use of cement. The article also debunked the rumor as false and exposed other misleading tactics such as the use of photographs taken in different places long ago which purported to be current and local.

The fact that an officer would post something on social media as though this were a substantiated fact with no concrete evidence (pun intended) is not "responsible" as Mayoral Public Safety Advisor Robert King put it. The Bureau is constantly telling people in the community not to spread rumors and assume wrongdoing immediately after police shootings-- even as the facts have been harder to come by in the last several years.

If the PPB is going to ask for an "innocent until proven guilty" standard for themselves, surely at the very least any post about such rumors/suspicions can be couched in terms such as "allegedly" or "suspected" rather than stated as facts.

Related to this point is the question of why the mayor's aide (a former captain at the PPB-- and a former president of the PPA) is making statements about the police action rather than the PPB

spokesperson or the chief. We note that the chief did describe the reality that some people think the police go too far while others think they don't go far enough.

Finally, it should go without saying that we are always concerned when we see the PPB using pepper spray and (reportedly) pepper ball guns against entire crowds of people. While there were some small disturbances and clashes, several people we know went downtown and didn't witness any violence. This brings to mind whether there was, again, an over-reaction by the police despite the fact that Officer Turner thinks his colleagues were "handcuffed."

Dan Handelman, Regina Hannon, Peter Parks and other members of Portland Copwatch

OPB

Displaced Portland Food Carts Still Looking For New Homes

By Meerah Powell

July 10, 2019

The ground-breaking for Portland's first Ritz-Carlton hotel is Friday. The popular food cart pod the building is replacing is still searching for a home.

More than 40 food carts that occupied the space at Southwest 10th Avenue and Alder Street had to leave the lot by the end of June.

Some of those carts have found other spots, but about 30 of them are hoping to stick together and form a new pod.

That group of carts is currently in storage on a lot owned by Prosper Portland.

"They're currently doing repair and maintenance on the carts there while we figure out logistics," said Marshall Runkel, chief of staff for Portland Commissioner Chloe Eudaly.

Eudaly's office, along with local nonprofit Friends of the Green Loop, is still working to relocate the carts.

The Green Loop is a linear park concept, approved by Portland City Council, that would wind through Portland in an effort to make the city more accessible by foot or bike.

The initial plan was to move the carts to the city's North Park Blocks temporarily, while seeking a permanent spot in the Green Loop, but that plan faced some opposition from neighbors, Runkel said.

"They raised really good points and they all expressed sympathy and support for the food carts," he said of the neighbors in opposition. "A lot of them had put a lot of time and energy into breathing life into the park blocks."

For example, Runkel said, there's a brand-new North Park Blocks playground near where the food carts would have gone.

"I think if we had time to have more of a normal public process, there's a potential we could have solved some of those concerns, but on the timeline that we're on that's just not possible," he said.

Instead, Runkel said, people are working to solidify another spot closer to the carts' original home.

“For these businesses, it’s really important that they’re located close to where the 10th and Alder site was, because they have these loyal customers that they’ve spent, in some cases, five or 10 years with,” he said.

He said organizers are hoping to confirm a specific spot for the carts in the next few weeks.

“Obviously for every week that these entrepreneurs aren’t out there earning money, it’s a very significant problem for them,” Runkel said. “So we’re working as quickly as possible to solve these problems.”