

BEFORE THE METRO COUNCIL

FOR THE PURPOSE OF REFERRING TO THE) RESOLUTION NO. 12-XXXX
VOTERS OF THE METRO AREA A LOCAL)
OPTION LEVY FOR THE PURPOSE OF) Introduced by XXXX
PRESERVING WATER QUALITY, FISH AND)
WILDLIFE HABITAT AND MAINTAINING)
METRO’S PARKS AND NATURAL AREAS)
FOR THE PUBLIC)

WHEREAS, in May 1995 voters in the Metro region approved a \$135.6 million Open Spaces, Parks and Streams Bond Measure with a stated goal of acquiring land in 14 of the 57 regional natural areas identified in the 1992 Greenspaces Master Plan and six of the 34 regional trails and greenways identified in the Greenspaces Master Plan; and

WHEREAS, on May 12, 2005, the Metro Council adopted Resolution No. 05-3574A “Establishing a Regional Habitat Protection, Restoration and Greenspaces Initiative Called Nature In Neighborhoods,” enacting a regional conservation policy that promotes fish and wildlife habitat protection using a variety of means; and

WHEREAS, in November 2006 voters in the Metro region approved a \$227.4 million Natural Areas, Parks and Streams Bond Measure with a stated goal of acquiring land in 27 target areas identified in the Greenspaces Master Plan; and

WHEREAS, pursuant to the two bond measures, land acquisitions exceeded goals and currently total 12,400 acres. In addition, Metro has acquired other parks and natural areas from voluntary transfers from local governments. The grand total of parks, trails and natural areas currently under Metro’s care and stewardship is more than 16,000 acres, including more than 75 miles of stream and river frontage; and

WHEREAS, on April 10, 2012 the Metro Council directed the Chief Operating Officer to establish a Natural Areas Funding Advisory Panel to consider a new funding source for ongoing care and maintenance of Metro’s parks and natural areas, considering the public’s previous investments in land acquisition, level of funding, timing and a long-term solution; and

WHEREAS, the Natural Areas Funding Advisory Panel returned its report to the Metro Council on August 16, 2012, recommending that the Metro Council refer a five-year levy to voters to restore natural areas, maintain and operate parks, engage the community and improve opportunities for people to safely use and enjoy more of the lands Metro has protected for the public and future generations long term; and

WHEREAS, the Metro Council is authorized under the laws of the State of Oregon and the Metro Charter to impose local option levies to fund natural area protection; and

WHEREAS, the Metro Council finds and determines that it is in the public interest to refer a five-year local option measure to the voters of the Metro region for the purpose of preserving water quality, fish and wildlife habitat and maintaining Metro’s parks and natural areas for the public, with a rate of \$xx per thousand of taxable assessed value for an estimated total outlay of \$xx; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED by the Metro Council that:

1. The Metro Council hereby refers to the qualified voters of the Metro region a five-year local option levy of \$xx per thousand of taxable assessed value with an estimated total outlay of \$xx for the purposes of maintaining and improving water quality, protection of fish and wildlife habitat, preserving regional parks, natural areas and stream frontages, and through continued management, restoration and enhancement of parks and natural areas; and
2. The Metro Council hereby further defines the purpose, allowed uses and outcomes for funds collected via a five-year local option levy according to the Levy Framework, attached as Exhibit A; and
3. The Metro Council hereby certifies the Ballot Title attached as Exhibit B for placement of the Local Option Levy on the ballot for the May 2013 General Election; and
4. The Metro Council authorizes and directs the Metro Chief Operating Officer to refer this Resolution, the Ballot Title, and the Explanatory Statement attached as Exhibit C to the County Elections Officers, the Secretary of State, and the Tax Supervising and Conservation Commission in a timely manner as required by law; and
5. The Metro Council authorizes and directs the Metro Chief Operating Officer to continue to seek long-term funding for natural areas protection.

ADOPTED by the Metro Council this ____ day of December, 2012.

Tom Hughes, Council President

Approved as to Form:

Alison Kean Campbell, Metro Attorney

LEVY FRAMEWORK

TAKING CARE OF NATURAL AREAS FOR WILDLIFE, WATER QUALITY, PEOPLE

During the last 20 years, a vast constellation of public land has quietly taken shape across the Portland metropolitan area. Starting with the closure of the St. Johns Landfill and transfer of Multnomah County's parks and cemeteries, Metro has evolved into a major landowner and manager. Twice, the region's voters have directed Metro to acquire additional natural areas for the benefit of the public to protect water quality, wildlife habitat and opportunities for people to connect with nature. Metro's portfolio has grown to nearly 16,000 acres, and that number may reach 17,000 by the time the proceeds of the most recent bond measure have been fully invested.

Top priority was given to buying sensitive habitat before it was developed or rose dramatically in price. As a result of Metro's bond programs, the region's publicly owned natural areas and parkland have grown by some 40 percent to a grand total of roughly 44,000 acres – enough to cover the entire cities of Beaverton, Hillsboro and Gresham. Today, Metro has the great responsibility of caring for more than a third of all those lands.

This flourishing network of natural areas and outdoor recreation demonstrates Metro's broader mission: making a great place. As Metro invests in livable communities, connections with nature are as critical as vibrant communities, economic prosperity and safe and reliable transportation. As this portfolio of land grows, the Metro Council has been considering important questions: What is the condition of these properties? Which land offers the best opportunities for restoring valuable habitat? Which natural areas could be opened for the public to use and enjoy? Is now the time for additional investments? The Metro Council sought the answers to these questions from the public and our partners, which have laid the groundwork for decisions about Metro's role as a major landowner and steward of these precious lands.

A treasure chest of opportunities

For good reason, Metro has concentrated for nearly two decades on land acquisition. Public sentiment centered squarely on securing land before it was lost to development, and voters approved two measures in a relatively short period to ensure that these lands were protected for the future. Investments have focused in "target areas" designed to protect streams and rivers, rare habitat, trail corridors and iconic landscapes. Although voter-approved funds have allowed Metro to assemble a growing number of natural areas and trail corridors and tackle basic, initial restoration work, no new funding has been secured for long-term stewardship. If natural areas are not actively managed and restored, they degrade significantly over time. Invasive plants can take over; erosion can damage water quality; threatened wildlife can disappear. Putting off key restoration work can make the same project more expensive – or even impossible – in the future. Without more resources, the future of the region's natural areas and parkland is in question. Metro's limited general fund dollars are not sufficient to protect the public's initial investment in its growing portfolio of land, let alone support restoration that can maximize the benefits for fish, water quality and people.

Many of Metro's natural area acquisitions also offer opportunities for people to enjoy the land they've helped protect and connect with nature. Since 2006, Metro has used the money approved by voters to open three new nature parks: Mount Talbert Nature Park near Happy Valley, Cooper Mountain Nature Park near Beaverton and Graham Oaks Nature Park in Wilsonville. Each has proven popular, and each has raised the bar for providing beautiful outdoor destinations. Opening these sites has also increased Metro's operating costs. And, as more people discover these places, maintenance and restoration costs

will continue to increase. As the region strives to create a world-class network of natural areas, parks and trails and expected population growth creates more demand, the need for more of these places is heightened – particularly in areas and communities that today are underserved. Inviting people to experience nature goes hand in hand with caring for the land and making the most of the public’s investment.

Making the case for dedicated funding for parks and natural areas

In addition to the natural areas acquired with voter-approved bonds, Metro has responsibility for a number of developed park sites that serve some of the most diverse populations of people in the region. More than 1.3 million people visit these places each year to enjoy hiking, bird watching, canoeing, golfing, camping, boating, fishing, picnicking, weddings and special events. Some Metro properties are more than 50 years old. As restrooms, maintenance buildings, picnic and play areas in these parks reach the end of their useful life, they need to be replaced. Without additional capital investments, the cost of maintaining these aging facilities will continue to increase. Without additional funding, basic services will need to be reduced.

Just over two decades ago, Metro didn’t own a single park or natural area. Today the agency is the largest owner of parks and natural areas in the Portland metropolitan region. Money approved by voters for land acquisition in 1995 and 2006 cannot be legally used for operating expenses. Once acquired, these lands require ongoing maintenance. To understand the magnitude of this need, in November 2011 staff completed a report for Metro Council, titled “*Metro’s Portfolio of Natural Areas, Parks and Trails: Opportunities and Challenges*” (the Portfolio report). This report summarizes Metro’s evolution as a landowner and park operator, and gives an overview of the current condition of property, along with the regional context and relationships that affect the portfolio. The report highlights the need for ongoing operations funding to fulfill the Council’s commitment to meet the public’s expectation that Metro steward these lands and protect their value and benefit to the region. Metro has gone more than 20 years without new operating revenues while its land portfolio has grown from zero to 16,000 acres and counting. Resources are being used wisely, but caring for this much land without new funding is not sustainable over time.

Advisory panel recommends 5-year levy to Metro Council

In July 2012 an independent advisory panel of 15 business, conservation and community leaders from around the region considered Metro's work to acquire, restore and operate regional parks and natural areas, and the associated challenges of taking care of them. The panel recommended that the Metro Council refer to voters a five-year local option levy focused on the following key themes:

Taking care of public assets

The investment supports regional parks and takes care of these assets as a legacy for future generations. Taking care of what we have needs to be a high priority.

Restoring fish and wildlife habitat

Restoration work needs to continue on properties that have been acquired and improved, and extend to as much of the portfolio as possible. Funding should focus on habitat restoration work that protects resources and reduces future funding needs.

Addressing equity for underserved communities

Levy funding provides an opportunity to help meet the needs of underserved communities. Be intentional in designing the levy projects and programs to address barriers that prevent underserved communities from using and benefitting from Metro’s natural areas.

Improving natural areas for people

With a five-year levy, capital-intensive projects with significant new ongoing costs should be minimized. However, investments that provide opportunities for people to enjoy more of these special places while minimizing safety hazards and impacts to habitat should be a higher priority.

The panel’s recommendation for a five-year local option levy offers an incremental approach to fulfill the Metro Council’s commitment to meet the public expectation of good land stewardship and fully realize the potential of the bond program. The panel noted that while a local option levy does not create a long-term solution, it will provide an important and timely first step while taking into account the reality of the region’s struggling economy, the challenges of our current tax structure and the cost of waiting. Funding from the levy is dedicated exclusively toward natural areas, parks and trails and not toward other programs or services, based on the panel’s recommendation. The panel understands that Metro will face budget challenges in the next five years but asked that cuts in natural areas, parks and trail program areas are not disproportionate just because new levy funding is available. This is based on keeping faith with the voters.

In an effort to understand and reflect the broader public’s priorities for funding, Metro reached out to stakeholders and sought input through opinion research and community engagement. Activities included holding meetings, giving presentations and having conversations with many of the Intertwine Alliance’s public and nonprofit partners, local government elected officials and staff, park directors, community-based organizations, organizations representing minority groups and communities of color, conservation education providers and others. These organizations and individuals were contacted and asked to help define the purpose and need for a local option levy for Metro’s parks and natural areas. Direct mail, advertising, social media, online surveys and other outreach efforts have been used to engage the broader public.

Wildlife AND people – the framework for investing

Based on the panel’s guidance and the input gathered from stakeholders and the public, staff has developed a framework for projects and programs that would be eligible for levy funding, focusing on two fundamental principles:

Fundamental principles	Program areas	Spending allocations
1. Restoring natural areas for wildlife, fish and water quality.	Natural areas	40-50%
2. Improving parks and natural areas for people	Regional parks operations	20-30%
	Improving natural areas for people	5-15%
	Conservation education/volunteer engagement	5-15%
	Nature in Neighborhood grants	5-15%

A Natural Areas Local Option Levy of \$xx per \$1,000 of assessed value will generate approximately \$xx per year. Staff have outlined priority projects in Attachments 1-4 for further refinement in a detailed annual work plan – with the vision of an integrated approach. For example, planned restoration activities will also include opportunities to engage community volunteers and offer workforce development and mentoring for youth and conservation education programs for people of all ages and backgrounds. In this way we can marry environmental with economic and social aspirations. Site improvements will highlight habitat restoration, provide cultural and natural history interpretation and improve experiences for a wide range of visitors. Because a five-year operating levy is limited in scale and scope, careful consideration has been given to ensure that projects can be completed within an appropriate timeframe and either reduce long-term operating costs or at least not increase them substantially. Funds would be divided among the various program elements in the percentages set forth in the chart above. All of the areas across Metro's 16,000-acre land portfolio would receive some level of increased maintenance and investment should the levy be passed by the voters.

Through levy-funded work, Metro can also increase and improve opportunities for underserved communities, specifically low-income and communities of color. By engaging all of our region's residents we can create conditions that foster the future stewards of our public lands. Levy-funded activities will engage diverse communities in becoming active stewards of the region's natural areas and better connect people with nature throughout the region while also delivering better results for the ecological health of our region and water quality. Intentional goals contained in this program include:

- Continued engagement with diverse communities for all of the program areas, using input to shape efforts moving forward.
- Meeting or exceeding Metro's goals for MWESB contracting; annual review as part of the program reporting, with areas for potential improvement identified.
- Specific outreach and involvement in college/career development pipelines for youth activities.
- Mentoring and volunteering opportunities.

More specifics about each program area follow.

RESTORING NATURAL AREAS FOR WILDLIFE, FISH, WATER QUALITY

Project selection

Natural areas restoration and maintenance projects are generally selected based on core ecological principles well accepted by restoration and conservation professionals and the best scientific information available. This includes the Intertwine Alliance's recently published Regional Conservation Strategy for the Greater Portland-Vancouver Metropolitan Area, which documents and offers guidance for the region's highest value habitat areas. Additionally, Metro will seek opportunities to leverage outside resources for restoring these lands – both financial and in partnerships. Potential partners include watershed councils, local governments and nonprofit organizations. Metro will seek diverse partners in planning and implementing restoration projects and strive to expand opportunities for MWESB-certified contractors to perform work on Metro lands.

In general, three types of restoration projects and activities are envisioned:

1. **Large scale, intensive restoration projects** to create significant improvements in the quality and function of the highest priority sites and habitats. These typically involve actions such as reconnecting floodplains to rivers, constructing or removing structures that direct hydrology and planting or thinning tree stands to develop healthy native plant communities.

2. **Smaller restoration projects** that improve ecological function. These projects are similar to larger restoration projects in purpose but smaller in scope and scale. Projects typically include vegetation management such as treating noxious and invasive weeds and planting native trees and shrubs. May also include activities such as replacing or removing failing culverts and modifying roads to prevent erosion from reaching streams and water sources.
3. **Natural area maintenance** focusing primarily on vegetation management and weed suppression. Maintenance will occur on virtually all of Metro's natural areas.

Criteria for priority setting

Projects to be funded are assessed according to the following criteria. Although they reflect a general priority order, all criteria will not apply to every project.

- **Water quality:** Clearly contributes to the protection of watershed health and water quality.
- **Habitat value:** Supports species or habitats identified in federal, state or regional conservation strategies or recovery plans.
- **Restoration potential:** Provides significant opportunity for successful ecological improvement within the time constraints of the levy.
- **Location:** In a regionally important location, including potential for enhancing connectivity between existing stream and wildlife corridors, parks, trails and natural areas.
- **Leverage:** Potential to engage diverse partners, increase funding, reduce long-term costs and create larger, more sustainable projects.
- **Community engagement:** Engages diverse communities through volunteer, workforce development and mentoring or other activities; provides historical, cultural and/or natural history education and interpretation opportunities.

Project refinement

The restoration and stewardship projects identified for investment with levy funds described in Attachment 1 will meet these criteria, including being able to be substantially completed within the timeframe of the levy, reducing long-term operating and maintenance costs and providing significant ecological improvement. In addition, projects are prioritized based on existing species-specific plans, the Oregon State Conservation Strategy and the Regional Conservation Strategy for the Greater Portland-Vancouver Region. They are described and further prioritized based on the site conservation and maintenance plan for each site. Invasive weeds identified as Early Detection and Rapid Response targets by state and regional organizations offer great return on investment by avoiding habitat degradation and higher future control costs. While refining the project priority list and approach, Metro will assess additional factors, including opportunities for collaboration with diverse partners, community engagement and ability to leverage outside resources. See Attachment 1 for Restoring Natural Areas draft project list.

IMPROVING PARKS AND NATURAL AREAS FOR PEOPLE

The Advisory Panel, stakeholders and the public agree that levy funds should be used to maintain existing parks and expand opportunities for all people to enjoy Metro's parks and natural areas, learn about and connect with nature. This is achieved through better park maintenance, conservation education, volunteer opportunities and improvements to natural areas for people.

Regional parks operations

Project selection

Metro's parks offer important access to nature for the region's citizens and support regionally important natural habitats. More than 1.3 million visitors enjoy Metro's developed parks each year for walking, hiking, bird watching, canoeing, camping, boating, fishing, picnicking and weddings, in addition to family and community events. As facilities such as restrooms and picnic shelters age, they reach the end of their useful life and need to be replaced. Funding from this levy will be used to make capital improvements, including upgrades to all of Metro's developed parks, with two exceptions: Metro's 14 historic pioneer cemeteries, and the golf courses and support facilities at Glendoveer Golf Course.

Projects are identified based on visitor safety, facility age and condition. Projects designated for funding include those identified in Metro's existing capital improvement program and the renewal and replacement plan. These were supplemented by information from field staff, safety records and park user feedback.

Criteria for priority setting

Projects to be funded are assessed according to the following criteria. Although they reflect a general priority order, all criteria will not apply to every project.

- Improve sustainability features that increase resource efficiency and facility longevity.
- Replace or upgrade facilities or amenities that have reached the end of their life expectancy.
- Reduce maintenance costs.
- Improve safety and security.
- Support continued high quality customer service.
- Respond to regulatory requirements such as Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliance.

Project refinement

Projects outlined in Attachment 2 reflect completed plans and previous public input and have been generally studied in terms of scope and costs. However, permits have not been secured and public input on projects in some locations may affect scope or alter priorities. Adjustments to this initial list may be made based on changing conditions and public input. Grants, partnerships, use of volunteers and other opportunities to leverage levy funds will be explored and factored in as appropriate during project development. Levy projects will be organized to leverage MWESB and sheltered-market contractor utilization.

See Attachment 2 for Regional Parks Operations draft project list.

Improving natural areas for people

Project selection

As the region strives to create a world-class network of natural areas, parks and trails, the need is heightened to improve some of these places so people can use them – particularly in areas and communities that today are underserved – and goes hand in hand with caring for them and making the most of the public's investment.

Levy funds provide an opportunity to develop low-impact, low-cost access to Metro's natural areas, focusing on providing hiking and walking opportunities for visitors. This will enable residents of the

region to experience the range of habitat types represented at these natural areas, learn more about them and become better stewards of these important regional resources. Improvements for visitors will be closely coordinated with conservation education, volunteer engagement and restoration projects to ensure that community needs are integrated into project design and development. Careful consideration is given to the limitations of a five-year levy and the desire to avoid increasing long-term maintenance costs. In addition, safety and security are ongoing challenges for protecting the natural resources at these locations. Modest investments that direct public use of select natural areas will create significant gains in water quality and ecological health.

Criteria for priority setting

Projects to be funded are assessed according to the following criteria. Although they reflect a general priority order, all criteria will not apply to every project.

- **Habitat protection:** The project reduces or eliminates visitors' negative impact on sensitive habitats.
- **Safety:** The project addresses a safety concern with current or future site access.
- **Light touch:** The project includes basic improvements such as trails and signage. The project is not capital intensive and avoids a significant increase to ongoing operating costs.
- **Enhanced stewardship:** The project provides access for volunteer and environmental education groups that will promote learning and stewardship.
- **Outdoor experience:** The project improves access to a natural area with a high quality outdoor experience. Activities beyond hiking and walking, such as boating and fishing, might be accommodated.
- **Equity:** The project improves opportunities to connect with nature in areas with a high concentration of low-income people and people of color who currently have poor access.

Project refinement

Final project selection and sequencing will need to be determined. Project lists may be modified with the help of stakeholders and the public. Metro's Chief Operating Officer will review and approve staff recommendations for projects that are designed to improve and expand opportunities for the public to use and enjoy Metro's natural areas.

See Attachment 3 for Improving Natural Areas draft project list.

Conservation education and volunteer engagement

Program development

The primary goal of levy-supported conservation education activities is to increase stewardship and volunteerism at the region's natural areas and increase the role of natural areas as places of learning, exploration and engagement for people of all ages and backgrounds.

Volunteer engagement

Stewardship of public land requires involving people in caring for the natural areas that have been protected on their behalf and for future generations. Today, volunteers donate more than 20,000 hours of service per year to Metro's parks and natural areas across the region. More than 2,500 people volunteer at Metro sites every year, often participating through their business or nonprofit group. Currently, demand for volunteer opportunities exceeds staff capacity to support their work. Volunteers supplement the work of agency staff members, increasing the quality and quantity of Metro's work.

Volunteers will play a key role across levy-enhanced programs. Volunteer coordination will be expanded to support opportunities for meaningful community engagement across all programs funded by the levy. For example, levy funds will support recruitment and coordination of regular work parties in restoration and maintenance projects, including some organized by nonprofit partners. Levy proceeds will also support specialty and volunteer event opportunities such as site stewards, wildlife monitoring and trail counting. Outreach to volunteers will be intentional in efforts to include diverse populations and communities.

Conservation education

There are two main components to the levy's conservation education programs. The first is enhancement of interpretive opportunities in Metro's parks and natural areas, with a focus on underserved communities. The second is conservation education and skill-building for children and teenagers.

Interpretive opportunities for all visitors

Visitors to Metro's parks and natural areas should have the opportunity to learn about the site's natural and cultural history, natural resources, restoration activities and regional significance. Levy proceeds will increase the diversity and amount of public programming, as well as interpretive signage.

Education and skill-building for youth

Community stakeholders identified college/career development pipelines for youth as a high priority. In response, conservation education's youth programming will focus on developing partnerships and programs that provide conservation-related mentorship and skill-building opportunities. Working with these stakeholders and others in the community, Metro will establish goals to create paid, multi-year opportunities for teens to develop high-level, diverse skills that prepare them for conservation-related college study and professional careers. One key goal is improvement in academic, social and career outcomes. Success can be seen in the longer term through program graduates returning as paid staff, either at Metro or in other similar organizations.

Criteria for priority setting

Conservation education programs and projects to be funded are assessed according to the following criteria. Although they reflect a general priority order, all criteria will not apply to every project.

- Develop conservation-related knowledge, skills and motivation in youth.
- Use Metro's parks and natural areas as places for learning, exploration and engagement.
- Involve both conservation education and conservation action – the service learning model.
- Emphasize the role of mentors and expose participants to professionals in natural resources, science, conservation education and community development.
- Engage diverse and underserved communities.
- Partner with community organizations to provide personal and professional skills development.
- Engage participants over several years – a pipeline to college- and career-readiness.

Program refinement

Metro's volunteer and conservation education programs can build on past experiences with partnerships that contain elements of the education and skill-building for youth programming outlined above. In addition, there are valuable models for youth conservation corps to draw upon locally and nationally, including the Oregon Zoo's own award-winning Zoo Animal Presenters (ZAP) program. Conservation education staff will engage internal and external stakeholders in a discussion to determine the most effective programming to achieve desired outcomes.

Volunteer and conservation education programs will be integrated into planning for restoration, park maintenance and natural area investments, considering current and anticipated visitor traffic, site attributes, geographic location and equity considerations. Evaluation is a challenging, yet critical component of this type of conservation education work and will be considered as programs are refined.

Nature in Neighborhood grants

Program development

The advisory panel and stakeholders recommended that Metro continue providing opportunities to connect people with nature by funding Nature in Neighborhoods restoration and enhancement grants. These grants have been a critical source of funding to support community partnerships that achieve regional goals of improving water quality and fish and wildlife habitat. The grant program also supports Metro’s commitment to addressing barriers that prevent underserved communities from using and enjoying the benefits of Metro’s natural areas.

See Attachment 4 for Nature in Neighborhoods grants funding objectives, eligibility, application review and selection details.

LEVY PROGRAM MANAGEMENT

The Natural Areas Local Option Levy performance will be measured over the life of the levy. To ensure accountability for the funds, program staff will produce an annual work plan to be approved by the Chief Operating Officer. At the end of each fiscal year, a report to the Metro Council will detail program expenditures by area as well as major accomplishments. The work plan and annual report will be presented at a Metro Council meeting, made available on the Metro website and featured in other public outreach channels.

The following outcomes will be addressed each year, as well as a list of projects completed and total expenditures to date:

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| <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Restoring natural areas for wildlife, fish and water quality.<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Natural areas restored, invasive species controlled, towards a target of 8,000 to 10,000 acres with improved water quality or wildlife habitat values over a five-year period.• Continue strong utilization of MWESB contractors that meets or exceeds performance standards identified in Metro’s Diversity Action Plan.
2. Site improvements and community engagement programs that expand opportunities for all people to enjoy Metro’s parks and natural areas, learn about and connect with nature.<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Improved quality and service for more than 1.3 million people visiting Metro’s developed parks through identified improved or replaced park amenities.• Increase opportunities to experience nature at priority locations.• Increase community engagement at Metro’s parks and natural areas through expanded education and volunteer programs, community partnerships and a community-based grant program.• Increase opportunities for communities of color and children from low income families to experience the region’s parks and natural areas.• Continue strong utilization of MWESB contractors that meets or exceeds performance standards identified in Metro’s Diversity Action Plan. |
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Eligible expenses

Revenues from the levy will fund program administration, restoration and maintenance of natural areas and parks, capital improvements in parks, and engagement of the community through grant, volunteer and educational programs.

Eligible locations

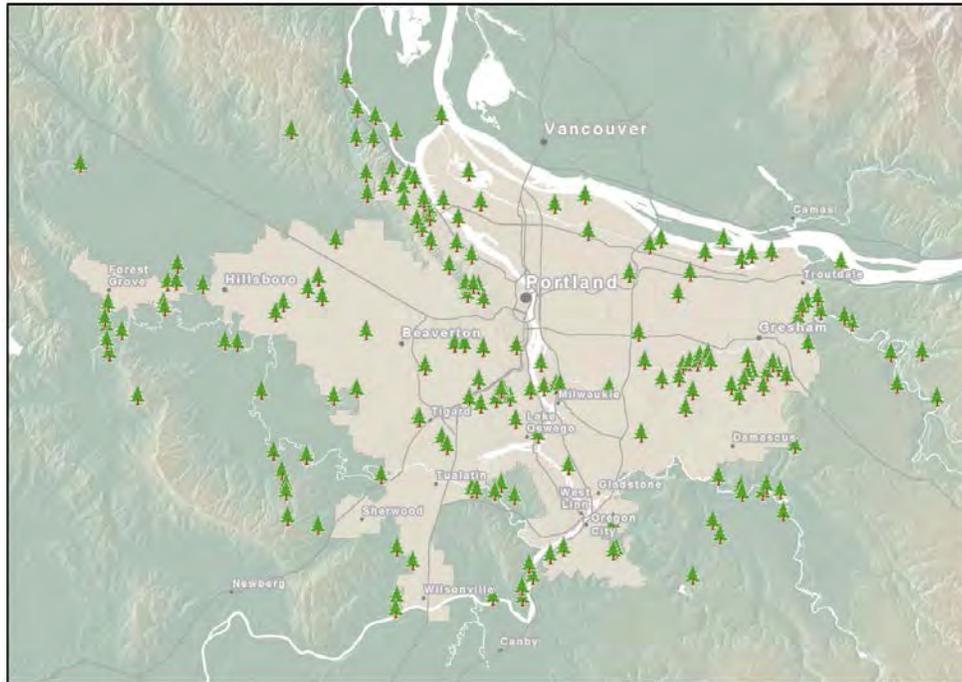
Natural areas restoration and maintenance, park facility improvements and natural area improvements for people projects may be funded only for the following sites:

- Properties owned and managed by Metro.
- Properties managed by Metro, regardless of ownership.
- Properties for which Metro holds a conservation easement, regardless of ownership.
- Properties owned by Metro, but managed by a partner through contract or Intergovernmental Agreement.
- Natural areas owned and/or managed by other public entities are eligible for Nature in Neighborhood grants.

Attachment 1

RESTORING NATURAL AREAS MAP AND PROJECT LIST

The map below shows the sites where levy resources will improve water quality and wildlife habitat, especially by controlling invasive weeds and planting diverse native species in our region’s most imperiled habitats.



Examples of proposed new and continuing major restoration projects

Target area/site	Acres	Focal habitat(s)/species	Key project elements
Clackamas River/Logan Natural Area	40	Forest	Control invasive species, replant failed forest planting for habitat and reduced maintenance.
Clear Creek/Clear Creek Canyon Middle Bench	20	Prairie, wetland	Restore natural water flow, improve water quality by closing ditches; treat invasives.
Dairy/McKay – Dairy/McKay Confluence	100	Floodplain prairie, wetland	Enhance floodplain connectivity; restore prairie and wetlands for habitat and water quality.
Gales Creek/Penstemon Prairie	120	Prairie, wetland, horned lark	Continue restoration of floodplain prairie and wetland habitats
Johnson Creek (various)	50	Riverine, riparian/salmon	Improve floodplain connectivity, restore native vegetation for fish and water quality.
Killin Wetlands	250	Wetland, riparian	Control invasive species; wetland and riparian planting to improve habitat and water quality.
Sandy River (various)	DNA	Riverine/salmon	Construct two side channels to enhance fish habitat and water quality
Tonquin Geologic Area/ Coffee Lake Creek	120	Wetland	Replace invasive monoculture with native shrubs for habitat and water quality.
Tualatin River/Gotter Prairie	350	Prairie, oak, floodplain	Continue habitat improvement and restoration of newly acquired property.
Westside Trail Corridor	30	Pollinator	Demonstration project as part of Westside Trail and habitat corridor.
Willamette Narrows (multiple sites)	500	Prairie, oak	Treat invasives and plant native wildflowers to solidify habitat gains made from oak release.
Willamette River Greenway/ Multnomah Channel	100	Wetland, floodplain, salmon	Improve connection of floodplain to river to improve water quality and salmon habitat.
TOTAL (12)	1,100		

Attachment 2**REGIONAL PARKS OPERATIONS PROJECT LIST**

The projects and sites below are indicative of the projects for regional park operations.

Mason Hill Park

Projects include site furnishings, restroom building, parking improvements, ADA improvements and signage.

Blue Lake Regional Park

Projects at Blue Lake Park include property fencing, entry drive/booth renovation, park communications system, boat concession renovation, native landscaping upgrades, sports and pathway renovations, traffic and parking improvements, utility and drainage improvements, playground, swim beach and restroom renovations, office and maintenance building renovation and addition of permanent shelters.

Oxbow Regional Park

Projects include maintenance area reconfiguration, office/residence renovation, restroom construction, septic improvements, communication upgrades, fire road repairs, site furnishings, ADA improvements, specialized trail equipment, cabins and additional group camp construction, play area renovations, equestrian area improvements and utility renovations.

Chinook Landing Marine Park

At this boat ramp the projects include pathway replacement, ADA improvements, bank stabilization, native landscaping upgrades, playground and picnic area improvements, signage replacement, boat ramp area dredging, parking improvements, boat wash station and fish cleaning station development.

Howell Territorial Park

The projects at Howell Territorial Park include a master plan update, signage, shelter construction, parking and access renovation and utility replacement.

M. James Gleason Memorial Boat Ramp

Beach, entrance booth/gate and ramp improvements are the projects for the Gleason Boat Ramp.

Sauvie Island Boat Ramp

The Sauvie Island Boat Ramp dock will be replaced, banks stabilized and the restrooms renovated. A new security gate will be installed.

Cooper Mountain Nature Park

Overflow parking will be developed.

Graham Oaks Nature Park

Recycling and garbage collection improvements will be made.

Smith and Bybee Wetlands Natural Area

Signage and security improvements will be made along with ramp and pathway renovations.

Mount Talbert Nature Park

Pathway renovations will be made at Mount Talbert Nature Park.

Attachment 3**IMPROVING NATURAL AREAS FOR PEOPLE PROJECT LIST**

The projects described below are suggestive of the types of projects that will be developed over the life of the funding measure.

Canemah Bluff North

Projects include construction of a viewpoint wall for safety at a bluff cliff, signage and trail improvements. Projects address current use of the site, closing trails for habitat preservation and opening new segments for a good walking experience.

Abernethy and Newell Creeks

This project addresses both safety and preservation issues, replacing transient camps with positive use. Project anticipates a trailhead, parking and trail work. The site has been regularly accessed for many years by local residents who enjoy walking through the natural area. However, there are issues with transient individuals using the site for camping and other unpermitted uses.

Chehalem Ridge Natural Area

Although the natural area is currently closed to the public, this project would take advantage of the opportunities at Chehalem Ridge for low-cost, low-maintenance access. In discussion with partners, early access projects would be identified and put in place potentially including signage and trails.

Forest Park Connections

This property north of Forest Park is currently used by walkers and cyclists to access nature close to Portland. Access to the site is challenging and there may be opportunities to enhance use. Over the past decade the demand for single track mountain biking trails has increased. This project would explore the potential to provide quality cycling and hiking experiences for formal single track cycling and walking trails, and as appropriate, construct the facilities.

Council Creek

This property provides habitat to amphibians, turtles and other wildlife. It is also an area where youth and adults create demand trails to access nature and the creek, and build tree houses, forts and rope swings. An analysis of the potential that this property may or may not have for formalized access and what uses the property can sustain while protecting the natural resources is necessary. The desired outcome of the plan would be a sustainable, formal trail with orientation and directional signage that would direct access to parts of the property that can sustain it and discourage access in sensitive habitats.

East Buttes

A network of informal trails currently exist on Gabbert Hill and Towle Butte in the City of Gresham, north of Butler Road. These trails are used by residents in a number of adjacent neighborhoods. A trailhead or multiple trailheads with orientation and directional signage that lead to a formalized soft surface trail system through Gabbert Hill and Towle Butte will be developed to allow for maintainable and safe access to nature while protecting sensitive habitat in these natural areas.

Attachment 4**NATURE IN NEIGHBORHOODS GRANTS PROGRAM****Grant program purpose**

The Nature in Neighborhoods grant program supports and creates partnerships in local communities that improve water quality, fish and wildlife habitat and connect people with nature.

Grant program goals (grant proposals can address only one or many of these to be successful)

- Connect people to their watershed and/or teach people about watershed health.
- Preserve and restore fish and wildlife habitat in local communities.
- Support larger conservation initiatives such as the Regional Conservation Strategy or climate change adaptation.
- Support nature education and programs for school-aged children.
- Improve the ability of underserved communities – particularly low-income and communities of color – to learn about, help restore, experience and connect with nature and the region's natural areas.
- Implement the Regional Trails Plan.

Requirements and eligibility information

Individuals, citizen groups, businesses, neighborhoods, nonprofits, schools and school groups, government agencies, faith groups and service groups with nonprofit or other tax-exempt status may apply. Metro is not eligible to apply for grant funds.

Grants must serve Metro-area residents. Projects must occur on publicly-owned or permanently protected lands within the metropolitan-area urban growth boundary or Metro's jurisdictional boundary, unless the project is on Metro-owned property. Projects cannot take the place of required mitigation or penalty payments or result in direct profit or proprietary resources. Grants may be awarded to projects on Metro-owned property only if Metro is not receiving grant funding.

All grant proposals require a minimum of three partners and a 1:1 dollar match of outside funding for every dollar awarded by Metro. The match should come from other funds and/or in-kind contribution(s) of materials, services or volunteer assistance. Match must be secured at time of final application. Funding from other grants managed through Metro cannot be applied towards match. Overhead costs are reimbursable up to 10 percent of the total grant award and as match up to 10 percent of total project cost. Overhead costs must be detailed and justified.

Grant evaluation criteria

- Applicants may address only one or many of the grant program goals to be successful.
- Proposals must meet all program requirements: e.g. three partnerships, 1:1 match, location.
- Proposal scope and timeline is detailed; partner roles and responsibilities are clear.
- Proposals have clear deliverables and measurable outcomes.

Grant application review and awards

The Metro Council will make all grant awards. A team of Metro staff and other professionals with backgrounds in restoration, conservation education, grant management, finance, volunteer coordination, project planning and community partnerships will review applications and make funding recommendations. Proposals will be evaluated based on the information submitted, responsiveness to program goals, stated criteria, and the review committee's professional and collective judgment.

BALLOT TITLE

This page is in development.

DRAFT

BALLOT TITLE'S EXPLANATORY STATEMENT

This page is in development.

DRAFT

METRO COUNCIL

Work Session Worksheet

Presentation Date: November 27, 2012 Time: 11:20 pm Length: 30 minutes

Presentation Title: 2013 Legislative Session (Work Session #2)

Department: Government Affairs and Policy Development

Presenters: Randy Tucker

ISSUE & BACKGROUND

This work session is for the purpose of discussing the 2013 legislative session and the Metro Council's objectives for the session. A number of legislative concepts and principles were discussed on November 6. Additional issues on which the Council might want to promote legislation or adopt positions will be discussed, as well as some proposed modifications to the Council's legislative principles in response to the November 6 discussion.

OPTIONS AVAILABLE

Council may wish to discuss specific legislative concepts or principles or direct staff to develop additional concepts.

IMPLICATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

QUESTION(S) PRESENTED FOR CONSIDERATION

Staff requests that Councilors provide feedback on proposed legislative priorities. No specific Council actions are required at this time.

LEGISLATION WOULD BE REQUIRED FOR COUNCIL ACTION Yes No
DRAFT IS ATTACHED Yes No

METRO COUNCIL ~~2012-2013~~ LEGISLATIVE PRINCIPLES¹

LOCAL AUTHORITY

1. **Pre-emption:** The Legislature should remove existing restrictions on local and regional revenue-raising authority and avoid enacting new limitations or pre-emptions. Within the context of Oregon's land use system, Metro's authority should not be pre-empted.
2. **Funding:** State mandates should be accompanied by funding.

LAND USE:

3. **Efficiency:** Land within UGBs should be used efficiently before UGBs are expanded.²
4. **Need:** The UGB should not be expanded in the absence of demonstrated need.³
5. **Transportation:** Land use and transportation planning should be coordinated so land uses do not undermine the efficiency and reliability of the transportation system and transportation investments do not lead to inappropriate unintended land uses.⁴
6. **Annexation:** As cities are the preferred governing structure for providing public services to urban areas, Metro supports reforms that will facilitate, or reduce barriers to, orderly annexation and incorporation.
7. **Rules/Statutes:** Administrative rules should not be adopted into statute.
8. **Successful Communities:** Metro supports legislation that facilitates the achievement of the region's six desired outcomes for successful communities: vibrant, walkable communities; economic competitiveness and prosperity; safe and reliable transportation choices; leadership in minimizing contributions to global warming; clean air, clean water and healthy ecosystems; and equitable distribution of the burdens and benefits of growth and change.⁵
9. **Non-Regulatory Tools:** State efforts at regulatory streamlining should include funding to support development of non-regulatory tools for achieving desired land use outcomes.⁶
10. **Fiscal Responsibility:** Funding to support urban development should be generated at least in part by fees on those who directly benefit from that development.

Comment [t1]: Poorly planned development?
Inefficient development?

SOLID WASTE:

11. **Product stewardship:** Metro supports efforts to minimize the health, safety, environmental, economic and social risks throughout all lifecycle stages of a product and its packaging, and believes that the producer of the product has the greatest ability, and therefore the greatest responsibility, to minimize those adverse impacts.

TRANSPORTATION:

12. **Transportation Funding:** Metro supports an increase in overall transportation funding, investments in a balanced multimodal transportation system, and flexibility in the system to provide for local solutions to transportation problems.

PARKS AND NATURAL AREAS:

13. **Parks and Natural Areas:** Metro supports measures to increase local and regional authority to raise revenues to support parks and natural areas and to increase the level of state funding distributed to local governments for acquisition, capital improvements, and park operations.

SUSTAINABILITY:

- 14. Climate Change:** Metro supports efforts to combat and adapt to climate change and to meet the state's goals for reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

ECONOMIC PROSPERITY:

- 15. Infrastructure Finance:** Metro supports measures, including funding or revenue measures, that facilitate state, regional or local investments in the public structures needed to ~~support~~ accommodate population and economic growth in a way that helps the region achieve its six desired outcomes for successful communities.
- 16. Metro Venues:** Because the Oregon Convention Center, Expo Center, Portland Center for the Performing Arts and Oregon Zoo are assets that contribute millions of dollars to the state and region's regional economyeconomies, Metro supports legislative measures that facilitate the success of these venues in attracting visitors and enhancing the quality of their experiences.

¹ Footnotes refer to applicable policy statements in Metro's Regional Framework Plan (RFP).

² RFP Policy 1.1 (Compact Urban Form).

³ RFP Policy 1.9 (Urban Growth Boundary).

⁴ RFP Policy 1.3.13 (Housing Choices and Opportunities; Transportation Goal 1 (Foster Vibrant Communities and Efficient Urban Form).

⁵ RFP Chapter 1 (Land Use).

⁶ Policy 1.1 (Compact Urban Form); Policy 1.2 (Centers, Corridors, Station Communities and Main Streets).

METRO
2013 LEGISLATIVE ISSUE IDENTIFICATION

Department: Government Affairs and Policy Development

Date: November 15, 2012

Person completing form: Randy Tucker

Phone: x 1512

ISSUE: Transportation Policy and Finance

BACKGROUND: JPACT has just begun discussing its potential legislative agenda for 2013, which won't be adopted until newly elected local officials take office in January. However, the "menu" of potential issues is fairly clear and includes the state's share of funding for the Columbia River Crossing; potentially other road-related funding; funding for non-roadway modes; road user fees; and restoration of local revenue-raising authority.

[NOTE: For a fuller discussion of these issues, I have included as an appendix to this sheet the policy discussion from the memo prepared for the October 23 meeting of the JPACT Finance Committee that was also included in the packet for JPACT's November 8 meeting.]

CRC funding will be Governor Kitzhaber's top 2013 transportation priority and the project is poised for federal support through both TIFIA and New Starts if Oregon and Washington are able to guarantee their shares of the overall financing package. At this time, it seems as though JPACT is likely to coalesce around support for CRC funding as the region's top 2013 priority. However, the nuances of this position have not been settled and the 2013 membership of JPACT is unknown.

Meanwhile, the Governor's budget is also expected to include support for a bonded \$60 million ConnectOregon 5 multimodal investment. Building on the success of ConnectOregon, a broad range of parties who are active in the Legislature on transportation issues is developing a proposal for an ongoing (as opposed to session-by-session) program for investing in non-highway transportation. This program would divide its investments evenly between moving freight (air, rail, marine) and moving people (transit, passenger rail, bicycle, pedestrian). Unlike ConnectOregon, it would not be limited to capital investments, but could be used for operations as well (e.g., public transit).

An upcoming Council work session includes a discussion of road user fees, including fees based on vehicle miles traveled. Legislation on this issue was supported as part of JPACT's 2011 agenda and is being prepared for the 2013 session.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Support a funding approach for Oregon's portion of the CRC that recognizes the statewide importance of the project and does not disproportionately come at the expense of other projects in the region. Support investments as part of the project that mitigate its impact and the impact of the existing freeway on directly affected local communities.
- Allow pre-emptions of local revenue-raising authority to expire.
- Support ConnectOregon 5.

- Support proposal for ongoing funding for multimodal non-roadway transportation (air, rail, marine on the freight side; public transit, passenger rail, bicycle and pedestrian facilities on the “people” side) that can also be used to support transit operations.

LEGISLATIVE HISTORY: Before each legislative session, the public lobbyists of the region work with JPACT to develop a transportation-specific regional legislative agenda. Resolution 11-4223, which described the region’s 2011 agenda, laid out three high-level priorities to support or protect: jobs and economic recovery, local funding options, and multimodal investment.

The most recent major transportation legislation was HB 2001, the 2009 Jobs and Transportation Act (JTA), which increased Oregon’s gas tax by six cents and directed funds to a number of earmarked projects statewide. Among HB 2001’s myriad other policy and finance provisions was the creation of the Urban Trails Fund and the requirement that Metro conduct scenario planning to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from light duty vehicles; we are carrying out this mandate under the name of Climate Smart Communities.

OTHER INTERESTED PARTIES: Virtually every local government in the region has a stake in the transportation conversation, as do business associations, environmental groups and others. The Oregon Transportation Forum, which includes many of these entities as members, has taken a special interest as an organization in developing a proposal for ongoing funding of non-road transportation.

IMPACT IF PROPOSED ACTION OCCURS:

- Completion of the financing package for the Columbia River Crossing, leveraging significant federal dollars.
- More reliable funding for transportation modes that are not eligible for highway fund dollars.
- Increased authority at the local level to generate transportation revenues.

APPENDIX

[Excerpt from 10/17 memo to JPACT Finance Committee from Randy Tucker, Metro; Dennis Mulvihill, Washington County; Gary Schmidt, Clackamas County]

IV. Transportation Policy and Finance Issues

The following is a “menu” of topics that JPACT might want to address in a 2013 agenda.

a. Columbia River Crossing: The CRC has dominated transportation discussions for several years now, and Governor Kitzhaber’s top transportation priority for 2013 is to secure the state’s portion of the CRC funding package. Economic expansion and job growth require continual investment in multimodal transportation infrastructure and the commitment of new revenues to the CRC is necessary for work to proceed on other priority projects.

Project advocates have long suggested that “it’s now or never” to move forward on the project if we expect to get federal dollars. Passage earlier this year of a two-year federal transportation authorization bill makes 2013 a legitimate window of opportunity. That bill vastly expanded TIFIA, a federal loan

guarantee program, and the CRC is very highly rated against the criteria for that program. The light rail element of the project is also highly recommended for New Starts funding and is in the President's proposed budget. However, the project cannot even apply for TIFIA or New Starts until local funding has been secured. If both Oregon and Washington act in 2013, both of these funding applications can be submitted with great confidence of success.

The state funding request for the CRC is expected to be for a revenue stream to support a bonded contribution of \$450 million or more, depending on project phasing. The Governor does not support using the gas tax to provide this revenue stream; one of several other options to raise \$450 million would be a combination of a \$5 vehicle registration fee and an \$8 title fee.

Specific issues:

- **Funding approach:** In 2011, JPACT's agenda for the CRC read: "Support state funding approach that recognizes statewide importance of this project." This language reflected a regional understanding that the benefits of the state's investment will accrue to the whole state, and that the state's contribution should therefore not come at the expense of other transportation projects in the region any more than it should come at the expense of other projects around the state. The legislative oversight committee has articulated its interest in treating the CRC as a statewide priority (like the bridges in OTIA III and the earmarked projects in the Jobs and Transportation Act), and no one has publicly advocated a state funding approach that disadvantages this region. However, concerns remain that legislators from other areas of the state might push for such an approach.
- **Community impacts:** While the project would provide benefits that would be both significant and broad-based, it could also have significant negative impacts that are localized and focused on the communities in the project's immediate vicinity. To address these impacts, the project includes new local roads, local street connections and other improvements critical to mitigate the impact on nearby neighborhoods.

The Governor has asked ODOT to look for ways to reduce both the immediate cost and the footprint of the project. One way to do so might be to divide the project into phases. However, this could mean that many of the local improvements described above would be delayed until a later date and might never be built.

Beyond these local improvements, which are part of the project itself, the CRC has committed to the development of a Community Enhancement Fund to address the impacts on the local community of I-5 south of the bridge, which divides the community it passes through. This commitment responds to a condition of approval that was adopted by JPACT and the Metro Council in Resolution 08-3960B and further endorsed in Resolutions 11-4264 and 11-4288. However, pressure from the region might be necessary to ensure that this commitment is carried out.

b. Other road funding: It is currently unclear whether the Legislature will have the appetite for funding anything beyond the CRC (if that). However, pressure from other areas of the state to fund local projects in addition to the CRC could lead to a broader funding conversation. Given the current statewide need for job creation, one theme for any additional road funding could be to focus on industrial site access, freight bottlenecks, transit-oriented economic development sites, etc.

c. Non-roadway funding: In late 2011, the Governor convened a large working group to consider how to carry forward the charge from the 2008 Vision Committee to develop a dedicated source of funding for transportation facilities and operations that cannot be paid for with highway fund dollars. While that group's efforts were not conclusive, they have spurred a series of conversations among the members of the broad transportation lobby (specifically the Oregon Transportation Forum – formerly the Oregon Highway Users Alliance, re-formed in 2011 to focus more broadly on the entire multimodal transportation system).

The concept under discussion would build upon ConnectOregon. It would create a dedicated funding source that would be evenly divided between investments in moving freight (air, rail, marine) and moving people (transit, bicycle, pedestrian). Unlike ConnectOregon, it would not be limited to capital investments, but could be used for operations as well (e.g., public transit).

d. Road user fees: In 2011, JPACT's agenda included an item that read: "Support a mileage-based fee on electric and plug-in hybrid electric vehicles to account for impacts from vehicles that generate little or no gas tax." While the effort to pass this legislation failed in 2011, a similar bill will be introduced in 2013 at the request of the Road User Fee Task Force. The current draft would impose a fee of 1.56 cents/mile on vehicles that get over 55 MPGe (miles per gallon equivalent). It is assumed that Oregon would eventually move away from the gas tax and replace it with some sort of user fee; many policy questions remain, including how to account for the differences between vehicles in efficiency and emissions and how to use pricing for managing transportation demand.

ODOT has already conducted a successful VMT pilot program and is currently conducting a second small pilot to test technology for revenue collection. The Community Investment Initiative's Leadership Council has discussed a significantly expanded pilot project that builds on the first pilot with greater numbers of participants and a larger variety of approaches.

e. Local revenue-raising authority: JPACT's 2011 legislative agenda included the following priority:

Preserve and Expand Local Options: The transportation challenge will require innovative policy and new funding commitments at all levels of government. Accordingly, the Legislature should remove existing restrictions on local and regional revenue-raising authority; avoid enacting new limitations or pre-emptions; and explore new structures and authorities that give local governments the flexibility to build, operate and fund transportation systems that support prosperity, livability and sustainability.

The Jobs and Transportation Act includes a prohibition on local vehicle registration fees (except to build the Sellwood Bridge) that sunsets on July 1, 2013, and a pre-emption of local gas taxes that expires on January 2, 2014. It is possible that extensions of these pre-emptions or other limitations on local revenue-raising authority might be proposed in the context of the CRC funding conversation.

METRO
2013 LEGISLATIVE ISSUE IDENTIFICATION

Department: Sustainability Center

Date: 19 November 2012

Person completing form: Randy Tucker, Hillary Wilton

Phone: x1512, x1845

ISSUE: Willamette Falls Legacy Project

BACKGROUND: The Blue Heron paper mill in Oregon City ceased operations in February of 2011, leaving behind a 23-acre site with over 500,000 square feet of industrial buildings in varying conditions. The site's location in downtown Oregon City and adjacent to Willamette Falls, the second largest waterfall by volume in the United States, provides a rare opportunity for a unique redevelopment project that could connect people with the Willamette River waterfront and a scenic opportunity of statewide significance, while supporting Oregon City's vision for the future. However, the site also presents significant challenges related to the condition of the structures, geology, stormwater management, environmental risk, and wildlife habitat, and redevelopment will be challenging and costly even under ideal circumstances.

Metro has been working with several public partners to assess the feasibility of a project that could have four major goals:

- **Economic redevelopment:** The loss of the Blue Heron mill and its 175 jobs was a blow to Oregon City. Private development on part of the site could play a role in reinvigorating downtown Oregon City. Conversely, failure to act could create an eyesore and trouble spot that could undermine the city's success.
- **Public access:** Willamette Falls, one of the most scenic places along the Willamette River, has been cut off from public access for 150 years. Improving public access could provide an important opportunity for people to connect with the river, which is isolated from many communities along its route.
- **Cultural interpretation:** The site offers the opportunity for visitors to learn about the cultural importance of Willamette Falls to native tribes as well as the history of Oregon since John McLoughlin built the first lumber mill in the northwest and Oregon City became the first incorporated city west of the Rocky Mountains.
- **Habitat restoration:** Historically, the vicinity of the falls has harbored unique plants and provided passage for lamprey and salmon. Protecting the site provides an opportunity to re-establish native plant communities and safeguard water quality and wildlife habitat.

Preliminary due diligence completed this year in partnership with Oregon City has given us a more finite picture of the project. It is particularly worth noting that the results of environmental investigations indicate that the environmental risk can be managed without the need for significant additional testing or remediation.

We believe Governor Kitzhaber will include funding for this project in the budget he presents to the 2013 Oregon Legislature.

RECOMMENDATION: While continuing to conduct due diligence, Metro should pursue legislative opportunities for state funding support for the Willamette Falls Legacy Project.

LEGISLATIVE HISTORY: None.

OTHER INTERESTED PARTIES: Metro has been working in partnership with Oregon City, Clackamas County and the State of Oregon to explore the feasibility of obtaining and redeveloping the Blue Heron site.

IMPACT IF PROPOSED ACTION OCCURS: Successful redevelopment of the Blue Heron site, investments in cultural interpretation features, and improved public access to the Willamette River and Willamette Falls could complement and strengthen Oregon City's downtown and create a significant visitor amenity and tourist attraction that could provide an economic boost with regional impacts. Restoration of plant and wildlife habitat would support the goals of Metro's natural areas program.