

Robert Liberty

METRO COUNCIL DISTRICT 6 NEWS



METRO

PEOPLE PLACES
OPEN SPACES

**Robert Liberty
represents
District 6, which
includes portions of
Northeast, Southeast
and Southwest
Portland.**



Increasing Oregon gas taxes by 60 percent, for what?

Last month the Metro Council voted 6-1 for a resolution that endorsed a 14 cent increase in the Oregon gas tax, a 60 percent increase over the current 24 cent per gallon tax. The resolution also endorsed a 1 cent per year automatic increase in the gas tax.

I was the sole vote against the resolution.

The justification for the proposed gas tax is that it has been 15 years since we had an increase in the Oregon gas tax. Since that time, inflation has greatly eroded the value of the revenues generated by

the tax.

Of course most taxpayers' incomes have also failed to keep up with rising costs, for groceries, education and health care. So a due regard for the taxpayers would be to show exactly why such a big tax increase is justified.

The resolution (including the attached "exhibit") included a lot of nice rhetoric about maintaining deteriorating roads and increasing transit services and facilities. But the Oregon Constitution prohibits using gas taxes for transit.

It is also true that we continue to proposed major new highway projects while falling behind in fixing the roads and bridges we already have.

The Oregon Department of Transportation's 2007 Bridge Condition Report classifies the structural condition of the I-5 bridges as "fair" while 30 other bridges and bridge structures on I-5 are rated as "structurally deficient."

But ODOT and the majority of the Metro Council support spending \$1.2 billion to replace the I-5 bridges (the interchanges and light rail cost another \$2.4 billion) while asserting that we are falling behind on maintaining existing infrastructure.

Yes, the new I-5 bridge could be tolled to cover part of the costs, but there will still be a gap of \$500 to \$600 million for the project that would be funded out of state gas taxes. Two cents out of the proposed 14 cent increase could be used to fill that gap.

Is there a reason that solving commuter congestion between Portland and Vancouver is our state's highest priority? Is this the most cost-effective place to reduce commuter congestion?

We won't know the answer to that question because last month the Metro Council also voted 5-2 against comparing the cost per hour of congestion saved by the Columbia River Crossing project with other highway projects in the region. Apparently no one is working on the kind of broad-gauge cost benefit analysis used in Britain and Canada in choosing between proposed investments.

We know that fixing the roads and transit that we already have reinforces existing communities instead of promoting sprawl elsewhere, sprawl that is associated with more driving. A "fix-it-first" policy is an important step toward achieving our greenhouse gas reduction goals.

continued

If an increase in the gas tax was expressly targeted and limited to fixing the roads and bridges we already have, then I would have been an “aye” vote. But until and unless we link increased funds with fundamental reform of our transportation investment policies in the region and the state, count me out.

– Robert Liberty

Open Houses help shape our region for the next half century

Clackamas, Multnomah and Washington counties, and Metro, are collaborating to protect valuable agricultural and natural areas, and enable great communities to develop, by designating reserves – areas that may or may not be used for urban growth in the next 40 to 50 years.

A Regional Reserves Steering Committee represents stakeholders from throughout the region and also includes one commissioner from each of the three counties and one Metro councilor. The committee will assess which areas are most suitable for future urban development and what areas should be preserved for their natural features, working farms or forests. The result will be the designation of urban and rural reserves.

The committee approved an initial study area – approximately five miles outside the current Metro urban growth boundary – for considering areas to be designated as reserves. At open houses throughout July, residents can learn more about the project and the reserves designation process, weigh in on whether the study areas are appropriate, and share their values and ideas on the development of reserves.

Check the Metro Reserves web site (www.oregonmetro.gov/reserves) for updates, additional meetings and more information.

5 to 8 p.m. Monday, July 7
Multnomah County East Building
600 NE Eighth St., Gresham

5 to 8 p.m. Thursday, July 10
Tualatin High School Commons
22300 SW Boones Ferry Road, Tualatin

9 a.m. to noon Saturday, July 12
Metro Regional Center Lobby
600 NE Grand Ave., Portland

5 to 8 p.m. Wednesday, July 16
Clackamas County Public Services Building,
rooms 369 A and B
2051 Kaen Road., Oregon City

Lake Oswego to Portland transit project comment period



Metro is taking public comment and suggestions on the proposed transit options that will be studied and reported on in the 2009 Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) on the Lake Oswego to Portland Transit Project. Comments will be accepted until Friday, July 18.

The study will be led by Metro in cooperation with the cities of Lake Oswego and Portland, Clackamas and Multnomah counties, TriMet and the Oregon Department of Transportation. Work is expected to begin in 2009 and conclude in 2010 with the selection of a single preferred alternative to be advanced into Preliminary Engineering and a Final Environmental Impact Statement.

Send comments via e-mail to trans@oregonmetro.gov or mail comments to Lake Oswego to Portland Transit Project, Metro, 600 NE Grand Ave., Portland, OR 97232.

Councilor Robert Liberty contact information

600 NE Grand Ave.
Portland, OR 97232
503-797-1552 | 503-797-1793 fax
robert.liberty@oregonmetro.gov

Ina Zucker, policy coordinator
503-797-1543
ina.zucker@oregonmetro.gov

www.oregonmetro.gov

About Metro

Clean air and clean water do not stop at city limits or county lines. Neither does the need for jobs, a thriving economy and good transportation choices for people and businesses in our region. Voters have asked Metro to help with the challenges that cross those lines and affect the 25 cities and three counties in the Portland metropolitan area.

A regional approach simply makes sense when it comes to protecting open space, caring for parks, planning for the best use of land, managing garbage disposal and increasing recycling. Metro oversees world-class facilities such as the Oregon Zoo, which contributes to conservation and education, and the Oregon Convention Center, which benefits the region's economy.

Your Metro representatives

Metro Council President
David Bragdon

Metro Councilors
Rod Park, District 1
Carlotta Collette, District 2
Carl Hosticka, District 3
Kathryn Harrington, District 4
Rex Burkholder, District 5
Robert Liberty, District 6

Auditor
Suzanne Flynn