

Kathryn Harrington

METRO COUNCIL DISTRICT 4 NEWS | April 2009

Kathryn Harrington represents District 4, which includes Northern Washington County, Cornelius, Hillsboro, Forest Grove, Northwest Beaverton, Aloha, Rock Creek, Bonny Slope, Bethany, Raleigh Hills, West Slope, Cedar Mill and Cedar Hills.



Fiscal management in volatile economic times

A personal message from Councilor Harrington

We are all feeling the pinch in these volatile economic times. As with your household budgets and those at your businesses, we in government are working diligently to ensure that we continue to deliver as much value as possible with limited cost. Here at Metro, your elected regional government, we have skilled financial analysts who watch the larger economic trends, specific agency revenue trends as well as our detailed costs and expenses for each program area that we deliver on your behalf. In this newsletter, we are providing a picture of our current financial state. Through the continued diligence of Metro staff and Metro Council budget planning and management, your regional government continues to operate with a stable financial footing. In serving as your elected Metro Councilor these last two years, I am impressed with the continuous cost effectiveness focus and the creative solution skills of every Metro employee and department. We will continue our standard of excellence on your behalf.

– Kathryn Harrington

Metro is cautious in financial downturn

Metro Councilors are currently reviewing the proposed budget for the 2009-2010 fiscal year beginning on July 1, 2009. Like all governments, Metro must have a balanced budget. And like workers and households in the region, Metro is cautious in this financial downturn. The solid waste system is a large part of Metro's activities, and we have seen a sharp decline in waste, particularly from construction and demolition. Even waste coming from households has fallen off as people are cutting back on consumer spending and staying in the same house or apartment.

On the positive side spring break has seen great attendance at the Oregon Zoo and at local theaters and performance halls where the "stay-cation" philosophy finds Metro residents enjoying local activities instead of traveling. Metro's proposed budget is about the same size as last year. Executive salaries have been frozen, and we have taken a sharp pencil to programs that have accomplished their goals and are ready to stand on their own. Growth areas include the continued purchasing of land to protect water quality and habitat and construction at the zoo, activities that may provide some local economic stimulus. Most importantly, we want to continue our land use and transportation work. When the region starts to recover, we want to remain ready to encourage and support the region's livability and environmental diversity as it returns to economic prosperity.

You can learn more about Metro's budget by visiting the website and typing "proposed budget" in the search box. A calendar shows the upcoming public hearings on the budget beginning with April 2, April 16 and April 30.



Metro

www.oregonmetro.gov

Metro's finances solid

Unlike other governments, Metro has a broad portfolio of programs with a variety of funding sources. We do not rely just on property tax or just on business receipts. We have carefully created reserves, Metro's equivalent of "rainy day" funds, in all our major areas to make sure that Metro can adjust smoothly to changing conditions without drastic service reductions to the public. We have frozen executive pay, eliminated or reduced programs that have already accomplished their goals and can continue without Metro's financial involvement, and have generally tightened our belt. We have not cut back on acquiring additional land to protect water quality and habitat, and we are moving forward with new construction at the zoo. These activities build for the future while providing some local economic stimulus. Most importantly, we want to continue our land use and transportation work. When the region starts to recover, we want to remain ready to encourage and support the region's livability and environmental diversity as it returns to economic prosperity.

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Metro launches high capacity transit build-a-system tool

On March 23, Metro launched an online build-a-system tool and questionnaire as part of the prioritization process for the High Capacity Transit System Plan. The plan will guide the region's investments in high capacity transit – light rail, commuter rail, bus rapid transit or rapid streetcar. The tool and questionnaire are available through April 24 at www.oregonmetro.gov/goingplaces.

The build-a-system tool allows users to be "virtual planners," choosing which high capacity transit lines to build within a limited budget. Users balance trade-offs such as ridership, cost, connection to attractions and institutions, and carbon emission reduction to create the system that they would like to see.

The tool is coupled with a questionnaire addressing the project's evaluation criteria to help Metro understand the values that drive people's thinking on transit investments. Responses to the questionnaire will be used to balance the region's priorities as Metro evaluates potential new lines and improvements to the current system.

The community values generated by the tool and questionnaire will be used by Metro and local jurisdictions in considering the choices and investments needed to successfully implement high capacity transit in a way that encourages rebuilding in centers and corridors. Knowing that high capacity transit is a powerful tool to help build vibrant, prosperous and sustainable communities, the feedback will also inform the Regional Transportation Plan update and support the aspirations of local communities.

Find out more about the plan by visiting project staff as they feature the online tool:

10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturday, April 11
Powell's Books
1005 W. Burnside St., Portland

11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday, April 18
Earth Day celebration
Downtown Hillsboro

To learn more about the High Capacity Transit System Plan, to answer the questionnaire and to build your system, visit www.oregonmetro.gov/goingplaces.

Metro's annual garden tour launches new look

Fresh from last year's 10th anniversary, Metro's popular Gardens of Natural Delights™ tour program is debuting a new look for a new season of discovering sustainable gardening that's safer for people, pets and the planet. The free tours showcase private and public gardens of beautiful blossoms and easy edibles grown without pesticides or synthetic fertilizers.

Hillsboro area – noon to 4 p.m. Sunday, May 3.
Registration now open; slots are filling fast!

To register, call the Metro Recycling Information hotline at 503-234-3000. For more information in general visit www.oregonmetro.gov/garden.

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

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Carlotta Collette, District 2
Carl Hosticka, District 3
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