

Are 'Niche' Taxes Metro's Next Move?

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Taxpayers in the Portland metropolitan Area may soon be paying more of their tax dollars to the Metropolitan Service District.

As discussed in the first two parts of this series, an appointed commission is writing a new charter for the regional government that would expand the service and planning functions Metro would be allowed to provide.

The charter, which will be presented to voters in November, will include authorization to employ more traditional funding methods to finance these added services.

"Niche taxes are always politically very convenient, but I don't know how effective they are," said committee member Charlie Hales.

The list of taxes the committee says Metro should be allowed to use include those Metro currently imposes, those already allowed by Oregon statutes but have not yet been used and some that would require voter approval.

The committee's list of recommendations include: property taxes; a tax on personal income; business income tax; vehicle registration fees; sales tax; per capita taxes on governments for services provided by Metro; hotel/motel tax; real estate transfer tax; a tax on entertainment admissions, including movie theaters, night clubs, etc.; construction excise tax, perhaps levied on the amount of floor area in a new building.

The recommendations are not yet written in stone. Committee members are holding off writing them into the first draft of the charter until they receive input from residents at two public hearings, scheduled for March 30 and 31. The locations and exact times of the hearings have not yet been determined.

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