

To: Commissioner Steve Novick
Re: City Gas Tax
From: BikeLoudPDX

cc: Mayor Hales
Comm. Fritz
Comm. Fish
Comm. Saltzman
Leah Treat

Dear Commissioner Novick,

BikeLoudPDX, a grassroots bicycle advocacy organization, would like to give our official input into the proposed 10 cent per gallon city gas tax. We applaud the council for returning to the contentious issue of transportation funding during the campaign season. However, we have three primary concerns:

- 1) The current proposal prioritizes street repair over safety projects. If we are seriously committed to a Vision Zero policy, dedicating 58% of the new funding stream toward pavement maintenance needs to be reconsidered. While smooth pavement can benefit cyclists, it only does so when the road being repaved is one that cyclists can safely utilize. We recommend reallocating a percentage of paving project funds to safety projects or redefining which streets are selected for repaving to greater emphasize streets with cycling facilities. (Or better still, use the opportunity to expand bike facilities on streets highlighted in the 2030 bike plan.)
- 2) Under the current gas tax proposal, diesel fuel is exempted. Diesel emissions are a serious health risk that have been linked to cancer and heart disease. They also contribute to smog that pollutes our beautiful city.¹ By many metrics, diesel pollution is a greater environmental hazard than standard gasoline. Considering its negative impact on public health and the environment, we see no reason that diesel fuel should be exempted from taxation.

To mitigate these concerns, BikeLoudPDX proposes extending the 10 cents per gallon city tax to diesel fuel, and that this revenue be dedicated to bicycle and pedestrian safety projects(or at minimum be targeted towards paving projects that improve active transport infrastructure). We would like to further add that in 2014 Multnomah County experienced 226 truck crashes, the most of any county in Oregon.² Considering this high number of crashes involving diesel-burning vehicles, it is appropriate to utilize funds obtained from taxing diesel fuel for safety projects that would protect our most vulnerable road users from crashes. This would re-balance funding to align with priorities laid out by Vision Zero, the Climate Action Plan, and the city-endorsed “Green Transportation Hierarchy.”

Thank you for your work on these issues,

Emily Guise and Ted Buehler, BikeLoudPDX Co-chairs

To be approved by the general membership, Nov 2015

1. Source: CA Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment Diesel Exhaust Fact sheet, http://oehha.ca.gov/public_info/facts/dieselfacts.html

2. Source: Truck Crash Stats for 2014, <http://www.oregon.gov/odot/mct/pages/safety.aspx>