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Transportation User Fee / Tax

Rev. Chuck Currie <chuck.currie@gmail.com>

Wed, May 28, 2014 at 8:06 PM

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Dear Mayor Hales and Commissioners:

I appreciated the opportunity to meet with Commissioner Novick yesterday to hear more about the proposed Transportation User Fee / Tax and to share concerns. All of us recognize that transportation is a major issue. We need bold answers to long standing complex problems and I appreciate that both the mayor and Commissioner Novick have started a much needed conversation.

The proposal, however, is problematic. As I noted yesterday, Sunnyside Church (one of my two congregations) would have to pay somewhere between \$2,000-\$3,000 per year. We already operate the oldest faith based shelter in Portland, the Common Cup Family Shelter, and provide low cost space to a day care and family center, Camp Fire's summer programs and the Y's after-school program for middle age kids. Our budget, which is modest, cannot absorb a \$2-3,000 loss. David Leslie of Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon made the point in our meeting with Commissioner Novick that some houses of worship could end up paying more then some corporate headquarters under the released proposal.

I'm dismayed to learn, however, that the city now plans to move forward with a proposal that only impacts residents and no businesses. Apparently, a plan to charge businesses, non-profits and houses of worship would come later. Residents, particularly those who are low-income and on fixed incomes, need to know that they are not going to shoulder the burden alone on this. The council should only adopt a full package that is well thought out, debated, and that has community buy-in.

Therefore, I strongly urge a NO vote from all five members of the council. Mayor Hales and Commissioner Novick should be applauded for bringing forward a proposal but this proposal is not ready for adoption. It is not clear that this fee / tax is fair and equitable. It is unclear what responsibility business will have in the burden sharing or what the costs will be to non-profits and communities of faith. We can build on the good work done by Mayor Hales and Commissioner Novick if a vote on the entire package is delayed.

Rev. Chuck Currie

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