

Portland's Action on Fossil Fuels

The Critical Energy Infrastructure Hub (CEI) is a six-mile stretch of industrial development along the west side of the Willamette River. More than 90% of all liquid fuel in Oregon is stored at facilities in this area, including the gas and diesel supply for the Portland metro area.

Through both Portland's Climate Action Plan and the 2035 Comprehensive Plan, Portland has made a strong commitment to transition from fossil fuels to cleaner, renewable fuels and electrification as both a critical climate action to meet carbon reduction goals and to build out a clean economy with green jobs. This transition to cleaner fuels and energy is also critical to address the community safety and environmental risks posed from accidents, spills or a seismic event in the CEI Hub.

In 2016, Portland City Council adopted an ordinance to ban the expansion of the fossil fuels storage facilities. The Western States Petroleum Association, Portland Business Alliance, Oregon Business & Industry, and the Columbia Pacific Building Trades Council joined together to challenge this ordinance multiple times in state court and at the State Land Use Board of Appeals. Soon the Bureau of Planning and Sustainability (BPS) will bring updated findings to City Council to respond to the remanded issues and anticipates final adoption of this ordinance.

Additionally, City Council directed BPS to update the Renewable Fuels Standard to increase use of cleaner biodiesel and renewable diesel as another key strategy to displace fossil fuels, reduce carbon and clean up Portland's air. City Council is expected to vote on the updated Renewable Fuels Standard in the coming months.

The City and Multnomah County have partnered to conduct an economic study of a catastrophic failure of the CEI hub. This study will assign a dollar value to potential losses and also tell us what costs would be borne by industry or by federal insurance programs, and costs would fall to the public here in Oregon.

Furthermore, the City is exploring the full strength of our regulatory and zoning authority to continue to transition away from fossil fuels and reduce safety risks for vulnerable communities.

The City of Portland is seeking coordination and collaboration with our jurisdictional partners to accelerate action on fossil fuels. Shifting from the fossil fuel economy to clean, renewable fuels and energy systems will require partnership and applying relevant authorities and actions.

Future Actions

At the State level:

- Reform the appeals process of local legislative land use decisions, such as Comprehensive Plan amendments and zoning code changes.
- Direct the Building Codes Division to require building permits for storage tanks. (Note: this change will only cover new structures.)
- Address the seismic vulnerability of the existing fossil fuel infrastructure and require seismic upgrades in a timely manner to make these facilities safer as we transition away from fossil fuels.
- Adopt statewide land use restrictions for storage of fossil fuels near the Willamette River.

At the County level:

- Ensure fossil fuel companies in the CEI zone are held responsible for any and all monetary damages resulting from tank failures following a Cascadia Subduction Zone earthquake event.

At the Federal level:

- Address the safety of how fossil fuels are carried over our railways, roadways, and waterways.
- Support investment and innovation for cleaner fuels development and generation of regionally sourced clean fuels.