

October 16, 2012

To: Portland City Council

Fr: Daniel Hall

Re: Portland Resolution on Fleet Fuel Sourcing and tar sands

Overview

In 2009, the City of Portland and Multnomah County adopted a Climate Action Plan that aims to reduce local overall greenhouse gas emissions 80% from 2009 levels by 2050. The City's leadership in adopting and implementing this plan is invaluable.

Unfortunately, the incursion of high carbon, high impact feedstocks from Canada's tar sands threaten to undermine this leadership. At least some of the refineries that supply petroleum fuel to the City of Portland's municipal vehicle fleet and other area vehicles take significant and growing quantities of feedstocks from Canada's tar sands. Producing tar sands creates 3 to 5 times the greenhouse gas impacts as producing conventional oil, and has devastating impacts on Canada's boreal forest and the communities living in it. Refining tar sands in the United States also exposes fence line communities to even greater levels of pollution.

Across the United States, the problem of Canada's tar sands has been a growing public concern for several years. Reflecting that concern, at least 16 major US companies—including Walgreens, Chiquita, Whole Foods and Trader Joe's—have publically confirmed action they have taken to reduce or eliminate the tar sands problem in their transportation footprint. In the Northwest, the City of Bellingham was an early leader in recognizing and acting to contain the tar sands problem embedded in the fleet fuel it purchases—all of which originates with one or more Northwest refineries using tar sands. City Council members in Portland, Maine and Seattle, Washington have recently begun to work on resolutions following Bellingham's example.

Background

Canada's tar sands are a severe and growing US problem, particularly in the Northwest where plans are moving forward to dramatically increase tanker traffic and refinery use of the more polluting and corrosive tar sands.

In Canada, the strip mining and drilling for tar sands have created environmental and social problems such that many believe they are one of the most destructive industrial operations in the world. Here are some of the extreme consequences:

- Mining for tar sands has produced the world's largest 'open pit' toxic lakes—now covering an area larger than Washington DC.
- If the industry moves forward with all of its current leases for mining and drilling for tar sands, we will lose Boreal forests equal to the size of the state of Maine or the country of Scotland.
- Turning tar sands into a type of synthetic oil (the primary purpose for mining or drilling for tar sands) generates 3 to 5 times more greenhouse gas than producing conventional oil generates on a well to tank basis.

The Northwest has long been a gateway for tar sands into the United States. The Trans Mountain pipeline – which currently plans to more than double its capacity - supplies tar sands to four of Washington State's five refineries. The fifth refinery, the one located in

Tacoma, also receives tar sands by tanker and train. According to the Oregon Department of Energy, four of these refineries supply 90% of Oregon's petroleum fuel. That percentage is likely to be much higher in the Portland area.

In addition to the increased lifecycle carbon emissions and other problems associated with extraction of tar sands, the use of this feedstock by Northwestern refineries leads to the following problems:

- Refineries using tar sands generate more intense emissions of sulfur dioxide than refineries that do not use tar sands. Sulfur dioxide air pollution impairs human breathing and heart function.
- Because tar sands 'bitumen blends' are more corrosive than conventional oil in refinery conditions, using tar sands increases a refinery's risk of accidents involving toxic leaks and fire.

How Portland can protect its investment in climate leadership and be part of the solution to the tar sands problem.

The effectiveness of many crucial elements of Portland's Climate Action Plan are being directly undermined by the growing influx of tar sands inputs to the area's refineries. With a 3 to 5 times higher carbon footprint, the use of fuels from refineries that take tar sands will offset the gains made by increased vehicle efficiency, and the use of biofuels and ethanol in diesel and gasoline. Increasing tar sands inputs in the Northwest will also make it very difficult for fleet managers to obtain low carbon fuels. As a result, it will be very difficult if not impossible for the City to meet its goal of reducing the lifecycle greenhouse gas emissions of transportation fuels by 20%.

However, Portland can adopt a fleet fuel resolution declaring that it wants to minimize its purchasing of fleet fuels with higher than normal social, environmental and climate footprints, like those from refineries using Canada's tar sands.

This resolution would both begin to address the high carbon, high impact fuels in the City of Portland's footprint and contribute to regional market pressure against plans to increase tar sands inputs to Northwest refineries.

Joining cities like Portland, Maine and Seattle and Bellingham, Washington would contribute to the trend of municipalities taking leadership role on this issue.

Portland could work with fuel vendors to source a greater portion of its fuel from outside of Washington State or, as Bellingham has done, indicate a preference for fuel produced at the Northwest refinery taking the least amount of tar sands inputs.

Conclusion

By taking action to address the tar sands problem in its own footprint, Portland will play a leadership role regionally (for the Northwest) and for the US nationally. In addition:

- Portland's fleet fuel resolution will strengthen the growing US market trend against Canada's tar sands.
- Portland's action will magnify the impact of municipal actions already taken against tar sands by Bellingham, Seattle and Portland, Maine in the US, and by Vancouver and Burnaby in British Columbia.
- Portland's leadership on the tar sands issue will support its reputation as a 'green city' and a national leader on environmental issues.

Parsons, Susan

From: Daniel Hall [danielahallconsulting@gmail.com]
Sent: Tuesday, October 09, 2012 11:26 AM
To: Parsons, Susan
Subject: Speaking at City Council Meeting 10.17

Hi Susan,

Thanks for putting me down to speak briefly to the Council on a new/non-agenda topic next Wednesday, the 17th. It's my understanding these speaking slots begin at 9:30 am.

The topic is: Portland's Climate Action Plan and high carbon fuels.

You can list me in the agenda simply as: Daniel Hall.

Thanks,

Daniel

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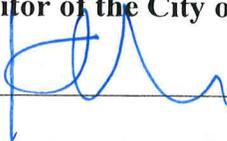
Request of Daniel Hall to address Council regarding Portland's Climate Action Plan and high carbon fuels (Communication)

OCT 17 2012

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LaVonne Griffin-Valade
Auditor of the City of Portland

By 

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