

Subject: Testimony to the City Council related to increasing the federal gas tax, January 29, 2014

The language in your resolution that states: "WHEREAS, federal gas tax revenues support both the Highway Trust Fund and the Mass Transit Account" identifies an ongoing problem that won't be solved by HR3636. While driving is subsidized at pennies per passenger mile (less than a dime), public transit is taxpayer subsidized at over 60 cents per passenger mile. User paid fares support only 25 percent of the operating costs. Two-axle transit busses also do the heaviest damage to local streets and roads for which the riders do not pay for. On the same note, bicyclists whom also benefit from the Highway Trust Fund pay directly zero into the fund along with nothing locally to support the actual price tag for bicycle infrastructure.

In addition to support from motorist paid fuel taxes, it is my understanding that due to automobiles becoming more fuel efficient, and more people driving less and/or using alternative transportation; over the past few years general fund dollars have also been injected into the Federal Highway Trust Fund at about the same dollar amount that is being siphoned off for alternative transport infrastructure. In other words, what motorists pay in federal gas taxes is self-sustainable for roadways. It is the alternative modes that are the problem, sucking and draining the fund dry without the users making any direct financial contributions.

While adding to the national debt, this social engineering mindset is not working.. History clearly demonstrates higher rates of personal mobility (such as driving) significantly contributes to greater economic productivity which in turn generates more family wage and better paying jobs. That in turn is supportive of a vibrant economy. Likewise, due in part to the bias anti-car mindset that Metro and the City of Portland continually attempt to impose on the people, wages and salaries associated with post recession jobs in the region fall well below the national average while the social engineering costs continue to soar.

It should also be noted that in addition to making improvements faster than with transit vehicles, the modern fuel efficient cars coming off the assembly lines use less energy per passenger mile (as measured in BTUs), and produce less emissions per passenger mile (as measured in Co2) than riding transit - and that includes transit in Portland.

Given all the facts, and without assessing some type of tax or user fee on the users of the alternative transport modes which in turn would help pay for the infrastructure being utilized, HR3636 which solely shakes down more money from motorists is a form of tax discrimination. Before passing any support resolution for an increase in the gas tax or any other user fees assessed on driving, an equity clause or amendment needs to be added that any support of the legislation must require the users of the alternative transport modes to also make direct fee based payments into the transportation trust fund accounts that will over time increase with inflation.

Respectively submitted,

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