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Calling all Portlanders to Climate Action: Comment on the Clean Air, Healthy Climate Proposals

The draft proposals respond to 2020 Climate Emergency Declaration by establishing fees generated from Portland's largest polluters to accelerate environmental justice initiatives. Public comment period now open through noon on January 4, 2021. [Learn more.](#)



Clean Air, Healthy Climate Proposal Overview

The solutions in this proposal would raise roughly \$11 million per year to support pollution reduction programs in Portland, particularly for communities most impacted by this pollution: Black, Indigenous and communities of color.

Background

In June 2020, [Portland's City Council unanimously declared](#) that a human-made climate emergency threatens our city, our region, our state, our nation, humanity, our economy and the natural world; and that this emergency calls for an immediate mobilization effort "to initiate greater action, resources, and collaboration that prioritizes frontline communities to restore a safe climate."

The Declaration adopted new, science-based reduction targets for Portland, including at least 50% reduction in emissions by 2030 and net zero emissions by 2050 or sooner, below 1990 levels. Greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions in Multnomah County are currently 19% below 1990 levels and plateaued, meaning that Portland is not on track to meet our carbon reduction goals to be a healthy, resilient city.

Dedicated funding is required to accelerate climate action at the scale and pace necessary to prevent further harm to Portlanders and to the local economy, especially for those most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, and importantly, to energize and strengthen the local economy to generate green jobs.

Oregon's clean economy has more than 47,000 energy efficiency and renewable energy jobs, with half of them in the Portland Metro region, but that job growth is slowing down. In 2020, Portland lost its place on the top 10 best clean energy cities ranked by the American Council for an Energy-Efficient Economy since it has started because as a city, we have not kept up with the programmatic and policy changes required to act on climate.

Portlanders breathe the dirtiest air in Oregon

In addition to environmental and economic harm from increased GHG emissions, air pollution has serious health consequences for Portland residents and disproportionately harms people of color and low-income residents. Local sources of air pollution result in increased incidence of respiratory diseases, cardiovascular damage, elevated cancer risk, birth defects, asthma and nerve damage, with widespread economic and social consequences, including death.

Nearly 40 percent of Black, Indigenous and people of color who live in Portland live within 1.2 miles of the City's biggest sources of air pollution and this proximity increases their vulnerability to chronic conditions that could cause complications if they fall ill with COVID-19. Air toxics affecting communities of color is an environmental justice concern that needs attention and solutions.

Portland's elevated level of air toxics has caused the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) to conclude that "air toxics are a serious concern in Portland" and that "the Portland region has the highest risk [in Oregon] to the population from air toxics due to business and population density."

This exposure to pollution means that Portlanders are at greater health risk, which translates into millions in health care costs and lost productivity. Exposure to diesel pollution alone is estimated to cost \$3.5 billion a year in health costs. For example, for every dollar invested in reducing diesel pollution, it delivers \$17 in health benefits. (Dirt on Diesel 2016, Oregon Environmental Council)

Proposed solutions to help Portland breathe easier

Both hazardous air toxics and greenhouse gas emissions harm community health and impose a significant cost to the community and economy. The “polluter pays” principle makes the party responsible for producing pollution responsible for paying for the damage done to an impacted community’s natural environment, local economy, and public health and safety.

The solutions to curb this pollution require increased action and should be based on the principle of “polluters pay.” **The Bureau of Planning and Sustainability proposes two solutions based on this principle:**

1. [Healthy Climate Fee](#) required of Portland’s largest emitters of greenhouse gases.
2. [Clean Air Protection Fee](#) required of Portland’s largest emitters of hazardous air pollution.

The proposed solutions would raise roughly \$11 million per year to support pollution reduction programs. The City of Portland would invest the revenue in projects and programs that reduce greenhouse gas emissions, improve local air quality, and enhance community health and resiliency, particularly for communities most impacted by this pollution: Black, Indigenous and communities of color.

Review the proposals and submit your comments

- [Healthy Climate Fee](#)
- [Clean Air Protection Fee](#)
- [How to comment](#)

Clean Air, Healthy Climate Proposal

[Healthy Climate Fee](#)

[Clean Air Protection Fee](#)

[How to comment](#)

[FAQs](#)

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News and notices

November 20, 2020

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Updated July 7, 2020

[City Council adopts Climate Emergency Declaration](#)

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