

April 23, 2018

TO: Salem City Council

FROM: Robert Cortright, West Salem

SUBJECT: AGENDA ITEM 3.3A: Modify SKATS Goals to include GHG Reduction

I strongly encourage the Council to approve the proposed letter requesting that SKATS add “reducing greenhouse gas emissions” to the list of goals to be addressed as the region updates its regional transportation system plan.

Additional Background Information

As you consider this issue, you should also consider extensive efforts that have been made over the last 10 years that establish a strong foundation for incorporating GHG reduction into metropolitan plan updates:

- Oregon has had an adopted GHG reduction goal since 2007. ORS 468A.205 calls for state to reduce GHG emissions to 75% below 1990 levels by the year 2050.
- SB 1059, adopted in 2010, and now codified as ORS 184.899, requires local governments in metropolitan areas, including Salem, to “consider how regional transportation plans could be altered to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.” (ORS 184.899(1)(b))
- In 2013, in response to direction from the Oregon Legislature, ODOT completed a state plan for achieving GHG emissions reductions in the the transportation sector. ODOT's plan, the Statewide Transportation Strategy or STS, calls for coordinated action by the state, metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs, like SKATS) and local governments.
- In 2015, Metro adopted its “Climate Smart Communities” plan for the Portland Metropolitan area. The Climate Smart plan is expected to reduce GHG emissions by 29% - more than meeting the state goal. In addition, Metro found that its Climate Smart plan will improve air quality, and public health, improve safety, expand transportation options, and actually result in less traffic congestion.
- LCDC – the Land Conservation and Development Commission – is currently developing amendments to Transportation Planning Rule (TPR) to clarify planning requirements for metropolitan areas. An option LCDC will consider is requiring metropolitan areas to (1) estimate GHG emissions from regional plans and (2) develop and consider a plan that would meet state GHG reduction targets. While Salem city staff are on LCDCs rulemaking advisory committee, they have thus far opposed such rule requirements.

Compelling Reasons for GHG Reduction Planning

There are a number of compelling reasons that the greenhouse gas reduction should be part of the region's transportation plan:

1. **It is a key step to Salem doing its part to address climate change.** Transportation is responsible for about 35% of the state's GHG emissions. As noted above, ODOT's "Statewide Transportation Strategy" calls for coordinated action by state, local and regional agencies, particularly by Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) like SKATS.
2. **Addressing GHG emissions would help implement the city's strategic plan and inform the city's comprehensive plan update.** The city's strategic plan commits the city to take steps to reduce GHG emissions. Many of the strategies that are effective in reducing emissions – expanding transportation choices and planning for walkable, mixed use neighborhoods – are ones the city will want to explore in its upcoming comprehensive plan update.
3. **Reducing GHG emissions is doable and actions that reduce GHG emissions will make Salem better off.** In 2015, the Portland Metropolitan area adopted its "Climate Smart Communities" plan that is expected to reduce their region's GHG emissions by 29% - more than meeting the state goal. And the combination of programs, actions and investments that Metro has planned are expected to make the region and its citizens better off than if GHG is not addressed.
4. **Funding and technical assistance from the state are available to conduct this work.** Over the last two years, ODOT and DLCD have offered to work with the SKATS and provide funding to prepare a "strategic assessment" which analyzes existing plans and explore options for reducing emissions. The agencies have also prepared guidelines, modeling tools and a toolkit of successful local programs and actions for accomplishing GHG reduction. In addition, ODOT and DLCD have Transportation and Growth Management (TGM) grants that can be used for this type of work. (TGM grant applications are due in June.)
5. **Planning for GHG reduction can help address outstanding compliance issues with the DLCD.** The city is behind schedule in meeting requirements to plan for expanded transportation options in compliance with the Transportation Planning Rule (TPR.) Additional work to address GHG reduction can help the city meet these obligations.
6. **Planning for GHG emission reduction will help position the city and region for new state funding.** In 2019, the Oregon Legislature is expected to approve a "cap and invest" bill that will provide new state funding for programs and actions that reduce GHG emissions. Communities that have adopted plans in place and projects ready to go are more likely to receive state funding.
7. **It is wasteful and pointless to update the region's transportation plan without addressing GHG emissions.** SKATS is preparing a regional plan that will extend 20 years into the future – to the year 2040 – which means it will cover most of the time available to meet the state's goal for a 75% reduction in emissions by the year 2050. Ignoring GHG emissions as we prepare this plan moves us in the wrong direction, makes it unlikely we will meet the goal, and assures that more drastic and painful measures will be needed to reduce emissions.