

Opinion

— GUEST OPINION —

Carbon credits for light rail: Another Salem switcheroo

By Jeff Gudman

Bureaucrats in Salem have pulled the wool over taxpayers eyes again.

The controversial Low Carbon Fuel Standard (LCFS) is quietly transforming into a secret subsidy for existing light rail and other mass transit, rather than the intended purpose of lowering emissions.

It was recently reported that officials are considering allowing existing streetcars, light rail and electric bus lines in Portland and Eugene to trade LCFS credits to gas companies.

The goal of the law was to compel fuel companies to produce cleaner gasoline.

Companies who invest in refining processes that reduce carbon emission would get a “gold star” (to use a grade school metaphor) as a reward that they can then sell to companies who didn’t.

The companies who buy the gold star in order to sell their dirtier fuels would then have a higher cost basis, making the cleaner fuel company more competitive.

More gas stations will then carry the cleaner, cheaper fuel.

Instead of buying gold stars, the fuel companies were expected to eventually earn their own. And over time that would probably happen.

Unless this turns out to be another Salem Switcheroo.

Spoiler alert: It is.

Demonstrating a commitment to green energy carries a heavy price tag, and our streetcars, light rail and electric buses don’t come close to paying for themselves with ridership alone.

Right now, payroll and self-employment taxes fund about half of Tri-Met’s operations. And it’s not enough.

Officials at the Department of Environmental Quality are now considering allowing light rail, streetcar and battery-powered busses to participate in the LCFS program.

This theme came around previously with the proposal to do



Submitted Photo

Jeff Gudman is a Lake Oswego City Councilor and Republican candidate for Oregon’s State Treasurer.

away with coal in Oregon—which is a concept I support.

The Department of Environmental Quality may soon be granted authority to sell the same “gold stars” that were supposed to be earned by gas companies that invest in making fuels cleaner.

Here’s why that’s not fair: The law was intended to incentivize gas companies to make cleaner fuel.

If they can buy credits from existing public transportation agencies—they lose that incentive.

The transportation agency doesn’t need to improve on anything to receive the credit—their systems are already in place, and already heavily subsidized.

So what do you call a gifted tax credit that can be sold on the open market?

That’s right—a subsidy.

The state-wide Low Carbon Fuel Standard becomes nothing more than a gas tax secretly intended to subsidize public transit in two of our biggest cities.

Not many people invest the time into understanding how carbon tax credits work—it’s boring after all.

We elect people to represent our best interests who are paid to scrutinize these complex policy issues and make good decisions.

Instead, they’re exploiting our collective lack of comprehension and playing three-card monte with our money to fund their personal agendas.

The proposal is a carbon intensity reduction policy goal wrapped up in an administratively challenging program that will provide an opportunity to be manipulated by the chosen few.

Like most Oregonians, I’ve had enough of Salem’s crony-capitalist politicians using our money to help the well-connected benefit from legislative and administrative generosity.

The cost to you, according to published estimates, is going to be between 4¢ and 19¢ per gallon at the pump.

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— SPECIAL COLUMN —

So I was thinking . . .

Strange sights on the pathway

By Jimmy Ingram
Special to The Baker County Press

I love the Leo Adler pathway.

Living nearby has made it convenient for me and my family to take some nice walks, runs, and bike rides over the last few years.

It’s a good place to catch a view of the mountains, the Powder River, and our beautiful downtown. It’s also a place where I’ve seen some inexplicable and unexpected things.

The man wearing a cape. Dear sir, I apologize for seeming startled at first glance but your red cape threw me off. We were four months removed from Halloween but I see your spirit lives on.

For a moment I thought there was a chance you were an actual superhero but the marijuana leaf hat seemed to say otherwise.

Captain Cannabis, maybe?

And while most who saw you that day probably wondered what the explanation was for your get-up, I mostly wondered if you had a closet full of capes: Work cape, dress cape, athletic cape, etc.

I’m just glad my four-year-old (at the time) wasn’t present because you would have thrown off my argument for why he now can’t wear his Superman costume to kindergarten every day.

I can hear my son now: “See, Dad. Grown-ups wear capes, too!”

Man walking goat. Dear sir: I’m used to seeing dogs on the pathway, but I’ve never seen a goat before.

I appreciate the idea that you and the goat share the goal of physical fitness but I don’t envy the sluggish pace you are forced to endure.

You seemed disgruntled at the fact that your goat stopped frequently to graze on the spring grass growing alongside the pathway.

Clearly the garbage she’s accustomed to eating isn’t giving her the fiber she needs.

I did rather enjoy the “click-clack” of the hooves on the black top—and having to circumnavigate the gift she



Submitted Photo

Jimmy Ingram is a local farmer and father of two who enjoys people watching within our wonderful community and beyond.

left on the pathway was only a minor inconvenience.

I hope to see you again if for no other reason than to take a picture of you and the goat to prove to my friends and family that I’m not insane.

The multi-tasking cyclist. Dear Sir: pardon my stare but I’ve never seen anyone ride a bike, smoke a cigarette, and drink a beer at the same time.

Your ability to navigate your bike down the pathway hands-free is an accomplishment in itself.

But Keystone Light in one hand and a smoke in the other? That’s commitment.

Odds would indicate one of three things is bound to happen to you eventually: Spill your beer, drop your cigarette, or take a tumble into the river.

Then again there is the chance you made it to your destination feeling satisfied and having burned off the calories in that beer.

I’m sure the people of the Leo Adler foundation would be proud to know the pathway is serving as a training aid to elite athletes like yourself.

Godspeed young man.

Happy crazy woman. Dear Madam: I’m not sure what drugs you used that day but I believe you got your money’s worth.

The last time I saw someone swaying and singing so enthusiastically was Julie Andrews in “The Sound of Music.”

Falling down multiple times didn’t seem to diminish your enthusiasm in the least.

I’m not sure where you were going and I’m not sure you did either.

You spun, danced, and stumbled your way past me and an elderly couple walking two small dogs with the grace of a runaway freight train.

I do hope you made it to your destination safely.

I also hope the man walking his goat wasn’t out that day because I’m certain that would be more than your chemically altered psyche could have handled.

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Published weekly every Friday.
Subscription rates per year are \$29.95 all areas,
e-mail delivery. \$39.95 print issue, home delivery,
Baker City city limits only. \$49.95 print issue,
mail delivery, outside Baker City city limits only.
Payment in advance.

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