

PUC recommends more taxpayer-funded solar incentives

Solar still an emerging industry

By **CLAIRE WITHYCOMBE**
Capital Bureau

SALEM — The state's Public Utility Commission has recommended the Legislature consider adopting taxpayer-funded incentive programs for solar energy projects.

The PUC spent the past few months evaluating and gathering input on the state's solar incentive programs, and voted Tuesday to pass along the substance of its recommendations to the Legislature.

The state already has several taxpayer-funded programs intended to encourage the development of solar energy projects. Some of those incen-

tives are scheduled to sunset soon.

Another handful of ratepayer-funded programs are paid for only by customers of specific utilities.

The report states that if the Legislature "wants to capture the full social and economic development benefits" of systems that convert solar energy into electricity, that taxpayer-funded incentives — programs that all Oregonians, regardless of utility provider, pay for and reap the benefits of — are the way to go.

The PUC released two preliminary drafts of the report — required by legislation in 2015 — earlier this year.

Solar companies had objected to the PUC's initial description in an early draft of the solar energy landscape in Oregon as "robust."

Jeff Bissonnette, the executive director of the Oregon

Solar Energy Industries Association, said in public comments Tuesday the final draft was an improvement from initial drafts.

Emerging industry

He said that solar energy was still an emerging industry and that he hoped the demand for solar energy in Oregon would remain stable. He added that his group was preparing an Oregon-specific solar business plan to evaluate the future potential of solar energy.

The commission noted in its final report that it's difficult to calculate the benefits and costs of each incentive program designed to encourage solar energy development, as projects or individual customers are often eligible for more than one incentive program.

Oregonians who benefit from any of the state's incentives can still receive a federal

solar investment tax credit, according to the report.

A joint interim legislative committee is currently conducting a review of the state Department of Energy, which has faced intense scrutiny in the wake of the troubled Business Energy Tax Credit program. That program ended in 2014.

In light of the Department of Energy review, the PUC did not offer specific recommendations on what form taxpayer incentives should take, but that the Legislature should study continuing an exemption on property taxes for people who have their own solar photovoltaic arrays.

An array or other renewable energy system can increase a home's value, but since 2011, the state has allowed property tax assessments to leave out any increase in property value resulting from the installation

of a solar PV system. Currently that exemption is scheduled to run out in 2018.

Home and small commercial projects

The commission also recommended legislators look at creating taxpayer-supported programs that incentivize residential and small commercial solar developments.

The second recommendation in the PUC's report is tied into another piece of legislation that laid out requirements for how much of the state's energy should come from small-scale solar energy projects.

That legislation, known as the coal-to-clean bill, required electric companies credit owners or subscribers to so-called community solar projects in such a way that reflects the value that solar energy provides the electricity grid, a concept called "resource value."

The PUC is in the process of determining that value. After that, the PUC plans to evaluate what the benefits and costs of using that resource value-driven methodology would be, according to the report.

Finally, the PUC also recommended that the Energy Trust of Oregon, which administers a solar electricity program paid for by a portion of public purpose charges on Portland General Electric and PacifiCorp bills, should modify its use of those funds to support high-value projects that provide "unique benefits" to the utility system.

An example of a unique benefit would be a project that improves reliability, according to the report.

The Capital Bureau is a collaboration between EO Media Group and Pamplin Media Group.

Walking on sunshine: Idaho company debuts solar sidewalks

Glass pavers could provide energy source

By **NICHOLAS K. GERANIOS**
Associated Press

SANDPOINT, Idaho — Scott Brusaw has a vision for the nation's roads.

He believes the solar-powered glass pavers his company makes could transform thousands of miles of pavement into a new energy source.

His business, Solar Roadways, recently unveiled its first public installation, in a downtown plaza in this northern Idaho resort town. It's 150 square feet of hexagon-shaped solar panels that people can walk and bicycle on.

The company is working on proof that the panels, for which it has a patent, are strong enough and have enough traction to handle motor vehicles, including semitrailers.

"Our plan is to replace all the asphalt and concrete," said Brusaw, noting concrete occupies over 48,000 square miles in the U.S. "If you cover it with solar panels, we can make three times our energy needs."

Going green

Solar Roadways is among a growing number of companies embracing renewable energy as the U.S. aims to reduce carbon emissions by one-third from 2005 levels by 2030.

But it is the only business receiving federal highway research money in pursuit of solar road panels, part of the Federal Highway Administration's efforts to fight climate change, said Doug Hecox, a spokesman for the agency in Washington, D.C.

Brusaw and his wife, Julie, got the idea for their Idaho business after watching the Al Gore movie "An Inconvenient Truth" and deciding they also wanted to join the battle against global warming.

They aren't the only ones eyeing roads and sidewalks as a potential energy source. A solar bike path was built in the Netherlands in 2014, and Germany and France have announced plans to build solar roads in the future.

The Brusaws hope to beat them into mass production. Incorporated in 2006, Solar Roadways has received three FHA grants, totaling \$1.6 million, and funding from the state and a local economic development agency. It also drew 50,000 donors who raised \$2.2 million on Indiegogo, a crowd-sourcing site.

Can glass support semis?

Solar Roadways has been testing the strength of its half-inch-thick glass by dropping 1-pound steel balls on it from a height of 8 feet, a standard test for concrete. So far, the tests have been successful, Brusaw said.

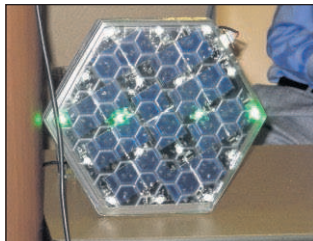
The glass has a traction surface that is equivalent to asphalt. In tests, vehicles are able to stop in the required distance, he said.

In strength tests, the panels can hold 250,000 pounds,



AP Photo/Nicholas K. Geranios

Solar Roadways founders Scott Brusaw, left, and Julie Brusaw display a one-third sized replica of one of their solar pavement panels at a news conference in Sandpoint, Idaho as Sandpoint mayor Shelby Rogstad looks on at right.



AP Photo/Nicholas K. Geranios

A solar pavement panel, produced by Solar Roadways company, is displayed at a news conference in Sandpoint, Idaho.

panels keeps roadways snow- and ice-free, improving winter driving safety.

The panels can currently be used for sidewalks, driveways and parking lots. The company is still seeking permission from the federal government to use them in roads.

What's next?

Solar Roadways wants to set up a manufacturing facility for the glass panels in Sandpoint as early as next year.

"We want to get the cost down to where the average homeowner can afford it," Julie Brusaw said.

For now, the Brusaws are doing custom jobs, but they envision do-it-yourselfers buying the panels at hardware stores.

The next public installations will be in Baltimore and at a Route 66 rest area in Missouri, Scott Brusaw said. Both are surfaces for pedestrians.

three times the legal limit for a semitrailer.

They are made of tempered glass, weigh about 70 pounds each and contain lights that can be programmed to direct traffic or alert drivers to problems. Each hexagonal panel is about 31 inches point-to-point.

The panels contain microprocessors that allow them to communicate with each other, a central control station and vehicles. They also are designed to be easily replaced if damaged.

According to Solar Roadways, heat produced by the

Interior secretary supports Oregon dam removal

Associated Press

KLAMATH FALLS — The U.S. Secretary of Interior supports the removal of four hydroelectric dams on Oregon's Klamath River.

The Herald & News reported that Secretary Sally Jewell endorsed the plan Monday in a letter sent to the Fed-

eral Energy Regulatory Commission asking it to approve an application for dam demolition.

The dam would also be transferred from its current owner, PacifiCorp, to Klamath River Renewal Corp., a consortium of federal, state and local officials. That would relieve PacifiCorp of all liabil-

ity once the dams are decommissioned and removed.

The Klamath County ballot will still contain an up or down vote on whether the dams should be removed, but it is mostly symbolic. It could be used as an argument against the project if the vote is overwhelmingly against dam removal.

Nike co-founder pledges \$500 million to University of Oregon

Associated Press

EUGENE — Nike co-founder Phil Knight and his wife have pledged \$500 million to the University of Oregon toward a new scientific research facility.

The Register-Guard reported that the donation is the largest ever awarded to UO and is meant to launch a \$1 billion, 10-year effort to build a three-building complex and

add new graduate students and post-doctoral researchers to the university.

The Knight donation will be provided over 10 years and will go toward construction of the new facility and

also to endowments to generate income for new faculty positions.

UO President Michael Schill says the \$500 million pledge is the biggest ever to a U.S. public flagship university.

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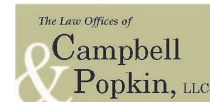
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Dawn McIntosh rejoins Campbell & Popkin



Dawn McIntosh

Judge-elect Dawn McIntosh has rejoined Campbell & Popkin to work closely with Chris Palmer, in whom she has great confidence. Dawn and Chris are both well-known for skillfully representing clients in divorce, separation, custody and other family law matters. Campbell & Popkin also provides services in business law, litigation, real estate, estate planning and probate. Dawn and Chris are both taking new clients.



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The public is welcome to the monthly meeting of the Tillicum Foundation Board of Directors.



Held October 26th at the Shelburne Inn, 4415 Pacific Way, Seaview from 5:00 to 7:00pm

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HOUSING CRUNCH


In a five-day special report, The Daily Astorian describes the problem and search for housing solutions through the eyes of professionals, developers, homeowners and renters.

The shortage of housing options affects:


- All income levels
- All ages
- All walks of life
- All areas




MONDAY:
Overview of the issues county-wide




TUESDAY:
Astoria



WEDNESDAY:
Warrenton



THURSDAY:
South County



FRIDAY:
County and rural areas