

Oregon to test pay-per-mile instead of gas tax

By GOSIA WOZNIACKA
Associated Press

PORTLAND — Oregon is about to embark on a first-in-the-nation program that aims to charge car owners not for the fuel they use, but for the miles they drive.

The program is meant to help the state raise more revenue to pay for road and bridge projects at a time when money generated from gasoline taxes are declining across the country, in part, because of greater fuel efficiency and the increasing popularity of fuel-efficient, hybrid and electric cars.

Starting July 1, up to 5,000 volunteers in Oregon can sign up to drive with devices that collect data on how much they have driven and where. The volunteers will agree to pay 1.5 cents for each mile traveled on public roads within Oregon, instead of the tax now added when filling up at the pump.

Some electric and hybrid car owners, however, say the new tax would be unfair to them and would discourage purchasing of green vehicles.

"This program targets hybrid and electric vehicles,



Patrick Connor's Nissan Leaf electric car sports a custom plate as he shows how to plug it in at a charging station Tuesday at the public library in Hillsboro.

AP Photo/Don Ryan

so it's discriminatory," said Patrick Connor, a Beaverton resident who has been driving an electric car since 2007.

State officials say it is only fair for owners of green vehicles to be charged for maintaining roads, just as owners of gasoline-powered vehicles do.

"We know in the future, our ability to pay for maintenance and repair... will be severely impacted if we continue to rely on the gas tax," said Shelley Snow with the Oregon

Department of Transportation. Other states are also looking at pay-per-mile as an alternative to dwindling fuel tax revenues.

Last year, California created a committee to study alternatives to the gas tax and design a pilot program; Washington state set money aside to further develop a similar program; and an Indiana bill directs the state to study alternatives and a test project.

While growing in popularity, electric vehicles and

hybrids are still in the minority on American roads, even in a state as green-minded as Oregon. Of 3.3 million passenger cars registered in Oregon at the end of 2014, about 68,000 were hybrid, 3,500 electric and 620 plug-in hybrid. A decade ago, only 8,000 hybrids were registered.

However, fuel-economy for gas-powered vehicles has been increasing as technology is developed that addresses public concerns about greenhouse gas emissions and dependence on foreign oil.

Oregon is the only state to actually test-drive the pay-per-mile idea.

The gas tax provides just under half of the money in Oregon's highway fund, and the majority of the money in the federal Highway Trust Fund, of which Oregon receives a portion.

Oregon's share of the fuel tax over the past two decades has been mostly flat and in some years declined, state data show. In 2009, the Legislature raised the tax from 24 cents to 30 cents per gallon, but that's not enough to avert shortfalls, state officials said, because construction costs increase with inflation.

Controversial ODFW appointees to get full Senate vote

Senators put hold on reappointments to fish commission

By HILLARY BORRUD
Capital Bureau

SALEM — Two controversial appointees to the Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission are headed to the state Senate for a confirmation vote, after they received support from a committee on Tuesday afternoon.

The sport fishing industry raised an outcry after Gov. Kate Brown announced last month the appointment of Astoria resident Bruce Buckmaster to fill a seat on the commission that has been vacant for two years. Sport fishers complained that Buckmaster had opposed a plan that allocates more fish on the Lower Columbia River to anglers, and they pointed out that none of the current

commissioners or Brown's appointees work in the sport fishing industry.

The Senate Committee on Rules nonetheless voted unanimously to send Buckmaster and fellow appointee Jason Atkinson of Jacksonville to the full Senate for confirmation.

In a surprise move, the committee held back the governor's two reappointments — Holly Akenson of Enterprise, and Michael Finley of Medford — because senators said they want new commissioners who will take a more active role in helping the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife to fix its long-term budget problems.

The agency has a \$345 million proposed budget for 2015 through 2017 but as committee member Sen. Brian Boquist, R-Dallas, said on Tuesday, it is also \$32 million short of the revenue necessary to balance that budget.

"In short, the agency's upside down," Boquist said.

"It's in serious financial problems."

Atkinson said he would bring to the commission his experience working on corporate turnarounds, and he would push for the state to more effectively market fishing and hunting opportunities in Oregon. Buckmaster said he would also apply his business experience to improve the agency's financial health and would like the state to rank the agency's programs in terms of their importance to its mission.

Atkinson said he initially considered what it could mean to his professional reputation if he takes a position overseeing an agency that is in financial trouble. Sen. Ted Ferrioli, R-John Day, said this was a valid concern.

"It's doing everything it can to alienate its customer base," Ferrioli said of the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, which receives much of its revenue from hunting and

fishing fees. "You want the job, you got it. I'm going to vote for both of you. But I'm going to tell you something, I'm not sure you're going to like me a year from now because I voted to confirm you. You're worried about your credibility, senator? You should be."

Ferrioli and other senators said another reason they did not vote on the two reappointments Tuesday, aside from the desire for commissioners who would take a more active role in overseeing the agency's budget and policies, was that they want more balance among interests on the committee.

Buckmaster previously owned a salmon feed company and served on the board of Salmon for All, a group that represents commercial fishermen, processors and other businesses on the Lower Columbia River. Atkinson is a fly-fisherman, former state senator and Republican candidate for governor.

BRIEFLY

Wandering wolf appears dunned up for more pups

MEDFORD (AP) — State biologists say Oregon's famous wandering wolf, OR-7, appears to be dunned up for a second set of pups in the southern Cascades.

The *Medford Mail Tribune* reported Wednesday that OR-7's satellite tracking collar has finally died, but Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife biologists are still getting a faint signal from the radio portion of the collar.

They can track that with hand-held antennas, and the signal indicates OR-7's pack has stopped moving around.

Biologist Mark Vargas says biologists won't disturb the wolves to check for pups until the denning season ends.

OR-7 became famous as his GPS collar, put on in 2011, showed him trekking across Oregon and into Northern California in search of a mate, which he found. Their first pups arrived last year.

Voters reject ban on GMO food in Benton County

CORVALLIS (AP) — Benton County voters have overwhelmingly rejected a measure that would ban cultivation of genetically modified organisms.

The *Corvallis Gazette-Times* reports that the measure was getting less than a third of the vote in unofficial returns Tuesday night.

The Benton County Local Food System Ordinance had become the focus of contentious public forums, dueling yard signs and vitriolic letters to the editor.

The ordinance was backed by political action committee Benton Food Freedom. A spokeswoman for the PAC admitted defeat but said the group will rewrite the bill and try again.

Many opponents of the measure rallied around Monroe-area farmer Debbie Crocker, whose family grows GMO sugarbeets and several other crops.

She says she is relieved the election is over but expects the controversial proposal will come up again.

Josephine County voters again reject public safety tax

GRANTS PASS (AP) — For the fourth time since 2012, voters in Josephine County have rejected a tax increase to restore cuts in law enforcement made when the federal government slashed timber subsidies.

The *Grants Pass Daily Courier* reports the Tuesday vote was 54 percent to 46 percent against a five-year levy to raise \$9 million a year for the sheriff's office. It would have restored patrols and expanded jail capacity.

Federal timber revenues shared with the county were so plentiful in the 1970s that Josephine County didn't levy property taxes.

But since logging was cut back in the 1990s to protect fish and wildlife, those revenues have declined sharply.

Congress filled the gap with subsidies to timber counties, but those funds have declined and at one point ran out.

Corrections

The *East Oregonian* works hard to be accurate and sincerely regrets any errors. If you notice a mistake in the paper, please call 541-966-0818.

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AccuWeather.com Forecast

TODAY

An afternoon thunderstorm

FRIDAY

Mostly cloudy with a t-storm

SATURDAY

Breezy in the a.m.; partly sunny

SUNDAY

A blend of sun and clouds

MONDAY

Variable cloudiness

PENDLETON TEMPERATURE FORECAST				
79°	54°	75°	49°	72°
54°	49°	49°	72°	51°
77°	54°			

HERMISTON TEMPERATURE FORECAST				
82°	58°	81°	52°	78°
58°	52°	51°	77°	51°
80°	54°			

ALMANAC

PENDLETON
through 3 p.m. yesterday

TEMPERATURE	HIGH	LOW
Yesterday	72°	54°
Normals	72°	48°
Records	93° (1928)	33° (1910)

PRECIPITATION
24 hours ending 3 p.m. Trace
Month to date 1.21"
Normal month to date 0.80"
Year to date 4.34"
Last year to date 6.42"
Normal year to date 5.91"

HERMISTON
through 3 p.m. yesterday

TEMPERATURE	HIGH	LOW
Yesterday	77°	52°
Normals	74°	48°
Records	94° (1928)	35° (2003)

PRECIPITATION
24 hours ending 3 p.m. 0.00"
Month to date 1.25"
Normal month to date 0.73"
Year to date 3.04"
Last year to date 3.77"
Normal year to date 4.72"

SUN AND MOON

	First	Full	Last	New
	May 25	June 2	June 9	June 16

Shown is today's weather. Temperatures are today's highs and tonight's lows.

REGIONAL CITIES

	Today			Fri.		
	Hi	Lo	W	Hi	Lo	W
Astoria	62	52	c	61	51	c
Baker City	69	46	t	67	44	t
Bend	68	46	t	65	38	t
Brookings	60	51	c	61	49	pc
Burns	65	44	t	65	40	t
Enterprise	67	47	t	64	44	t
Eugene	70	52	c	70	46	pc
Heppner	76	52	t	74	47	t
Hermiston	82	58	c	81	52	t
John Day	68	48	t	67	46	t
Klamath Falls	64	45	t	63	35	pc
La Grande	72	50	t	71	47	t
Meacham	67	43	t	64	41	t
Medford	74	57	t	75	48	pc
Newport	57	51	c	57	49	c
North Bend	61	54	c	60	52	c
Ontario	75	53	t	77	54	t
Pasco	85	56	c	83	53	t
Pendleton	79	54	t	75	49	t
Portland	76	56	c	71	53	c
Redmond	71	48	t	66	37	t
Salem	75	53	c	72	49	c
Spokane	79	55	pc	80	53	t
Ukiah	70	47	t	68	44	t
Vancouver	76	55	c	70	51	c
Walla Walla	79	60	t	77	56	t
Yakima	85	57	pc	81	53	t

WORLD CITIES

	Today			Fri.		
	Hi	Lo	W	Hi	Lo	W
Beijing	87	59	pc	89	62	pc
Hong Kong	86	77	t	83	79	t
Jerusalem	82	55	s	80	56	s
London	66	47	pc	68	52	t
Mexico City	79	56	t	76	56	t
Moscow	72	56	c	77	57	t
Paris	63	45	c	66	49	c
Rome	71	51	pc	70	56	sh
Seoul	75	52	pc	76	52	s
Sydney	68	56	sh	63	55	r
Tokyo	75	63	pc	75	63	pc

WINDS

(in mph)	Today	Friday
Boardman	WNW 3-6	WSW 7-14
Pendleton	WNW 3-6	W 7-14

UV INDEX TODAY

1 3 5 6 4 1

8 a.m. 10 a.m. Noon 2 p.m. 4 p.m. 6 p.m.

0-2, Low 3-5, Moderate 6-7, High; 8-10, Very High; 11+, Extreme

The higher the AccuWeather.com UV Index™ number, the greater the need for eye and skin protection.

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NATIONAL WEATHER TODAY

Shown are noon positions of weather systems and precipitation. Temperature bands are highs for the day.

National Summary: A cloudy, cool and soggy day is in store for parts of the mid-Atlantic today. High pressure will drive cool air deep into the Plains, with thunderstorms across Texas. Spotty storms will develop in the West.

Yesterday's National Extremes: (for the 48 contiguous states)
High 96° in Presidio, Texas Low 21° in Brimson, Minn.

NATIONAL CITIES

	Today			Fri.		
	Hi	Lo	W	Hi	Lo	W
Albuquerque	68	50	t	75	48	s
Atlanta	79	57	pc	79	61	s
Atlanta City	59	48	r	72	45	pc
Baltimore	56	47	r	77	46	s
Billings	67	45	pc	69	46	s
Birmingham	76	53	pc	78	57	t
Boise	75	53	t	72	51	t
Boston	66	50	pc	69	47	c
Charleston, SC	92	65	c	80	61	pc
Charleston, WV	62	43	c	72	42	s
Chicago	67	46	pc	62	44	s
Cleveland	62	47	pc	61	40	pc
Dallas	68	61	t	74	65	t
Denver	60	47	t	62	44	c
Detroit	66	46	pc	64	40	pc
El Paso	82	59	c	88	62	s
Fairbanks	79	51	pc	81	53	pc
Fargo	70	41	s	75	47	pc
Honolulu	83	69	pc	83	69	pc
Houston	82	70	pc	82	72	t
Indianapolis	61	46	pc	72	49	s
Jacksonville	93	66	t	87	67	t
Kansas City	66	46	pc	67	51	t
Las Vegas	78	59	pc	73	58	c
Little Rock	70	53	pc	71	59	c
Los Angeles	70	57	pc	68	57	pc
Louisville	65	47	pc	75	56	s
Memphis	69	52	pc	74	61	pc
Miami	91	76	t	91	77	t
Millwaukee	67	44	s	56	42	s