

February 24th, 2015

House Committee on Energy and Environment
Oregon State Capitol
900 Court Street Northeast
Salem, Oregon 97301

Multnomah County Supports SB 324 and Implementation of A Clean Fuels Program in Oregon

As the public health authority, Multnomah County is working to improve the poor air quality the region experiences due in large part to the burning of diesel and gasoline in the transportation sector. Multnomah County is also very concerned about the significant health threats posed by climate change, and transportation fuels are the largest contributor to greenhouse gases in the county. Implementing a clean fuels program in Oregon is a smart, cost effective way to address both of these issues. For these reasons, Multnomah County strongly supports the adoption of SB 324.

In 2009, the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality convened the Portland Air Toxics Solutions process, which identified cars and trucks as a major contributor to poor air quality Multnomah County. Air quality in Multnomah County is a significant problem, with several key air toxics produced by cars and trucks at more than ten times over health benchmarks. In fact, Multnomah County ranks fourth worst in the nation for community exposure to diesel particulate matter. Poor air quality poses a significant health risk for everyone in Multnomah County, but falls hardest on children, people of color and people in poverty. These are many of the same groups that the Multnomah County serves through its community health and anti-poverty programs, undermining the County's mission of a "healthy, safe and prosperous community for all". Fully implementing a clean fuels program in Oregon supports this mission.

Climate change poses a significant threat to the health and well being of the people in Multnomah County and across the state, and the transportation sector produces 37% of the emissions in Multnomah County. Multnomah County is working hard to reduce countywide emissions by supporting livable communities and alternative modes of transportation, but it will not be able to reach its carbon reduction goals without support at the state level as well. Reducing the carbon content of fuels in Oregon through a clean fuels program is a critical strategy for achieving both local and state climate goals.

Finally, Multnomah County supports a clean fuels program to support a thriving local and state economy. Money spent on fossil fuels produced outside of Oregon is exporting economic development potential in the clean energy economy. Multnomah County recognizes this opportunity, and has supported clean fuels in its operations by using biodiesel blends in its diesel equipment, integrating electric vehicles into its fleet, and supporting electric vehicle charging stations in public spaces like libraries.

Multnomah County urges passage of SB 324.