

NEWS RELEASE

(The soon to be established) Friends of Charles Lewis

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How many city council candidates does it take to fill a pothole? (One, if you tamp him in real nice.)

PORTLAND, Oregon – On Wednesday, July 11th at 8:55am, Charles Lewis, his friends, and neighbors will fill in potholes on their unpaved road in the Cully neighborhood while pointing out holes in the massive new transportation tax proposals.

This will be a small, informal news conference where Lewis will first give a brief presentation on problems inherent in the recent transportation tax proposals as well as some possible solutions. After which, Lewis and a small group of friends and neighbors will roll up their sleeves and physically fill in potholes on Lewis' dirt road in the Cully neighborhood.

“We need a reasonable, equitable and well-planned approach to solving our transportation problems,” said Lewis. “There are obviously some significant problems with our transportation infrastructure, but I believe many issues can be solved with proper planning and a creative mindset.”

Lewis' news conference is in response to a series of Transportation Town Hall Meetings that advocated 8 potential tax proposals including a 12 cents a gallon gas tax and a special street maintenance fee among many other tax proposals.

“Living on a dirt road in the middle of Northeast Portland, I want good roads as much as the next person – perhaps even more,” said Lewis. “What I don't want, though, is a ‘politics as usual’ approach to infrastructure where we try to spend our way out of a problem – Portland simply can't afford that mindset any more.”

“It's not any one person's fault,” continued Lewis, “the funding mechanism needs work. When funds that could have gone to the general fund are diverted for special interest projects, Portland's basic infrastructure suffers. Struggling families and small businesses shouldn't have to shoulder the burden of paying twice for basic services while pet projects are paid for with ‘surplus’ and diverted funds.”

Lewis learned the importance of living within your means while serving as a Peace Corps Volunteer in the Congo. “Serving in the Peace Corps taught me that throwing money at a problem is not always the best solution,” said Lewis. “The Peace Corps showed me that many societal problems can be solved with hard work, accountability, and creativity.” Perhaps Lewis' approach is best highlighted through the nonprofit he started called Ethos Music Center in North Portland. Now in its 8th year, Lewis' nonprofit music school brings music education back to thousands of underserved youth every year with very little government support.

At the informal news conference, Lewis will highlight significant issues concerning the recent Transportation Town Hall meetings, as well as highlighting some potential long term solutions. A video of the mini-event combined with a text copy of Lewis' remarks and photos will be available online at www.CharlesLewis.com shortly after the meeting.

“As a community, we need to put the brakes on any transportation proposal that doesn't predominantly focus on increased accountability and creative management,” said Lewis. “Some advocates for increased spending have missed that point, and are already forming committees to decide how to spend the new tax dollars – that's putting the cart before the horse.”

Lewis believes that accountability for existing funds and long term planning must be at the forefront of any potential proposal. Right now, all eight proposed plans either increase taxes or fees, but none focus on using existing resources more efficiently.

“We can't change the bad decisions and poor planning in the past that put us in the current situation,” said Lewis, “but we can change the future. Any new transportation proposal *must* be coupled with increased accountability, long term planning, and a creative mindset. We can't continue to spend our way out of problems caused by poor planning and lack of oversight.”

As one small example of poor planning, Lewis highlights the freshly paved road on Sandy Boulevard. The street had not been complete for more than a week when workers cut a massive hole in the fresh pavement near 47th avenue and Sandy, presumably for utility work. While the road was “patched” within a few weeks, it will never be the same again. The raised patch provides an entry point for moisture and creates a new road hazard for bicyclists. Perhaps proper planning and coordination could have encouraged that work prior to completing the final layer of asphalt.

Lewis is also concerned that some proposals would disproportionately impact middle income and low income people. Under one scenario proposed in the transportation town halls, gas taxes could be raised 12 cents per gallon. Lewis cites this as a classic example of a regressive tax that benefits the wealthy at the expense of the poor. In addition, Lewis points out that a city-based gas tax would penalize city residents, encouraging commuters to simply buy their gas outside of Portland's city limits while the less mobile get stuck with the lion's share of the expense.

Critics of the Transportation Town Hall meetings also cite a number of process oriented problems. To begin with, while city hall insiders received early notification of the meetings, many in the general public were mailed notices after the meetings already started taking place. In addition, a press release for the town hall meetings was not released until the day prior to the first meeting.

Critics are also concerned that the presentations were confusing and misleading. The town hall meetings highlighted significant transportation problems including freeway congestion, decrepit bridges across the Willamette, and unpaved roads, yet these issues aren't in the city government's list of responsibilities. Freeways are run by the state, most of the bridges across the river are owned by Multnomah County, and individual property owners are responsible for paving their own streets. The new tax proposals do very little to improve these identified problems, leaving many asking why they were identified in the first place.

Lewis is currently the only declared candidate for Portland City Council Seat #1, currently held by Sam Adams. Other potential candidates including Amanda Fritz, Chris Smith, and Dave Lister are on record saying that they will not run for the seat unless Adams runs for Mayor.

Lewis will be running for city council under Portland's "Voter Owned Elections" system that is designed to take big money out of the political process. Potential candidates demonstrate their viability by collecting 1,000 signatures and \$5 donations from registered Portland voters. Once they have proven this base level of support, the city provides the candidate with a total of \$150,000 to run their campaign. Lewis has challenged any potential opponent to limit his or her spending to similar levels to avoid the appearance of being "bought and paid for" by big money politics.

Charles Lewis is the Founder and Executive Director of Ethos Music Center, a nonprofit music school based in North Portland. Over the past eight years, Ethos has helped make up for the lack of music education in the schools by starting up after school music programs in over 100 schools and community centers throughout the Portland Metropolitan Area. In addition, Charles owns Portland Duck Tours, an emerging small business that supports our city's thriving tourist scene and local economy. Portland Duck Tours highlights the Rose City with land and water tours in a bio-diesel powered amphibious bus.

Charles has an extensive record of public service including serving in the U.S. Peace Corps, building houses for Habitat for Humanity, working for Portland Mayor Vera Katz, and starting up Ethos, Portland's nationally recognized and award winning nonprofit music school.

In addition to his public service activities, Charles has an educational background well suited for a Portland City Commissioner. Charles graduated from the University Portland in 1994 (magna cum laude) with degree in Political Science. After serving in the Peace Corps, Charles received a full scholarship to Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government where he served as one of the school's first Public Service Fellows. At Harvard, Charles was elected Student Body President and received the Robert F. Kennedy Award for Excellence in Public Service, one of Harvard's highest honors for public service. Charles graduated from Harvard in 1999 with a Master's Degree in Public Policy and a concentration in Business and Government.

More about Charles Lewis' upcoming campaign including a full personal biography can be found online at www.CharlesLewis.com. The site will be updated frequently, and now features video endorsements from some of "Charlie's Angels," the incredible volunteers and supporters who will drive this grassroots campaign.

Media members are encouraged to cover the mini news conference in person or electronically by logging into www.CharlesLewis.com shortly after the event. If you would like to attend in person, please RSVP to info@charleslewis.com to get directions and more information.

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