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Vice Chair  
Energy Trust of Oregon**Lukas Angus**  
7 Waters Canoe Family,  
and member of the Nez  
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The Light Lifestyle, LLC**Victoria Heroux**  
Oregon Department of  
Environmental Quality**Rick Hodges**  
NW Natural**Liz Hoekstra**  
Portland State University**Tammy Lee**  
Transportation Research  
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NW Power and  
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Lewis & Clark Law School**Kari Schlosshauer**  
Safe Routes to School  
National Partnership**James Wooten**  
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Individuals do not represent their  
business or employer while  
serving in their capacity as an  
ACSI member.

January 6, 2022

Dear Chair Kafoury and Commissioners,

The impacts of climate change are here now. In the past 18 months, Multnomah County has suffered from a host of “unprecedented” or “hundred year” weather events including the 2020 wildfires, the ice storm in February that left hundreds of thousands without power, and June’s deadly heat dome. Meanwhile, the COVID-19 pandemic has continued to profoundly harm people’s health, safety, economic security, and sense of community.

These events have caused extreme harm to people’s health, destruction of infrastructure, and even death to county residents. (See [Regional Climate and Health Monitoring Report](#), Fall 2021). The suffering is concentrated in our communities with lower incomes and in historically marginalized groups, and solutions should be targeted to address these inequalities.

**ACSI CHARTER UPDATE**

This year, ACSI made significant [updates to its charter](#). We added a treaty obligation, acknowledging our responsibilities to honor tribal treaties and to take actions that reflect those responsibilities. We also added a vision statement that better aligns with the county’s [Environmental Justice Resolution](#), acknowledging how racism and colonialism have led to environmental injustices.

**CLIMATE AND CLEAN ENERGY RECOMMENDATIONS**

Because the climate situation has fundamentally changed, our response to it must also fundamentally change.

We ask that Multnomah County use all the resources and skills at your disposal to prioritize the resilience, safety and well-being of communities and individuals as we move into an unprecedented moment in human history. Be creative in considering what might be possible and how it might be used to reduce climate impacts. Learn from indigenous knowledge and the communities that have lived in this



region, or even return resources and land to their stewardship and care. Be an example, not just for the residents of our county, but for other local governments on how to meet this moment with a focus on those who most need the county's support to be able to withstand the challenges we are facing.

### **Increasing Tree Canopy**

As the County prepares for increasingly dangerous heat waves, increasing tree canopy is an important strategy to reduce temperatures. This is particularly true in areas that experience heat islands - generally historically redlined areas, where temperatures can [soar 25 degrees higher](#) than areas with better tree coverage, including Mid and East County, and parts of Portland such as along 82nd Ave and in St Johns. Of all the cities studied by Dr. Vivek Shandas of PSU, [Portland has the highest temperature disparity between affluent and historically under-invested neighborhoods](#), which means when extreme temperatures hit, like many other climate impacts, they hit worst, those least able to withstand them.

Trees prevent illness and premature death, and are also associated with many physical and mental health benefits. [We need to work now](#) to prevent the next heat wave from killing our vulnerable community members - both through a social/public health angle to connect people to networks who can watch out for them and help them to access resources, and a green infrastructure angle to reduce heat island effect and provide cooling natural areas where people can access shade and water.

We recommend significant investments for both planting and workforce development to strengthen opportunities for green jobs in the most impacted communities. Building on the success of Green Gresham, Healthy Gresham in planting trees in Rockwood, we also recommend working with jurisdictions in East County to promote investment in tree planting, also utilizing County resources as funding opportunities arise.

### **TRANSPORTATION RECOMMENDATIONS**

2021 was yet another more-deadly year for transportation, and there continues to be a lack of local transportation funding available for the County and the region to allocate toward the significant transportation safety issues experienced by people in Multnomah County.

### **Addressing Inequities in Safety**

As Multnomah County's [REACH Traffic Safety Report: At the Intersection of Transportation, Health, Race and Justice indicates](#), traffic injuries are the third leading cause of death in the County (7.9 per 100,000), and the rate of injury is nearly double for Black people living and moving around in the County (13.9 per 100,000). We can't make progress on other leading causes of death and health



disparities when people feel unsafe accessing places for school, physical activity, nutritious food, and other neighborhood destinations.

Establishing safe speeds is a first step the County can take to creating inclusive space on our streets where everyone feels comfortable getting around in the community.

### **Use of Federal Transportation Funding**

In November, President Biden signed into law the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), which will bring [\\$1.2 billion in additional transportation funds to Oregon](#). As federal dollars flow into the state, we urge the County to use its voice to advocate for state leaders to spend these one-time federal transportation dollars on projects that cannot be built using state highway trust fund monies, prioritizing projects that provide reliable, affordable, and climate smart transportation options, and address needed maintenance, safety, and climate issues.

We also ask that you use your voice, including on JPACT, ODOT Region 1 ACT and the East Multnomah County Transportation Committee to not support expanding roadway capacity for private vehicles, e.g. the Interstate Bridge Project and Rose Quarter Project. The County could also conduct or request more in-depth analysis of health impacts for freeway projects, including dispersion modeling of air pollutants.

### **AIR TOXICS RECOMMENDATIONS**

Multnomah County has long been a leader in advocating for improved air quality on a local and statewide level. We ask that you continue that legacy in two areas that have a significant impact on County residents: wood smoke and diesel pollution. The reduction of air pollution is more important than ever in the wake of a respiratory pandemic, especially as we know that such pollution [increases our susceptibility to COVID-19](#).

#### **Wood Smoke**

Wood smoke pollution is a potent source of small particulate matter and has a disproportionate impact on Black and Latinx populations and medically vulnerable residents. In addition to particulate pollution, wood smoke contains several harmful air toxics including benzene, formaldehyde, acrolein and polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs).

The County should establish a health-based ambient target for PM 2.5 emissions to reflect this reality and set goals for the future. Only 3% of households in the County rely on wood burning as a primary heat source, but this accounts for 50% of wood smoke pollution in the area. We urge the County to invest in a changeout program for wood stoves, similar to programs in several counties throughout



Oregon. We encourage changeouts only to less polluting heat sources such as heat pumps, which would also increase climate resilience for these households, because heat pumps can also be used to cool homes during dangerous heat waves.

We also encourage the County to use its authority to protect public health by regulating commercial wood combustion. Many Portland restaurants are following recent trends toward wood-fired foods (pizza, barbecue, bread, etc.) while others are burning for outdoor ambience or warmth. The County should investigate how much these sources contribute to local PM 2.5 emissions and potentially a) require filtration of biomass cooking and b) restrict ambience burning.

The County should also consider other options to control wood smoke emissions as the population grows and the urban area becomes more dense. The ordinance addressing wintertime burning could be strengthened and better funded and enforced. Care will be needed to enforce without creating additional burdens for marginalized and low income communities. An education first framework will be crucial, as a key component of reducing wood smoke pollution will be to change social norms around wood burning. Continued education should build on outreach messages developed by Environmental Health and the Office of Sustainability.

## **Diesel**

Diesel pollution is one of the most challenging and insidious environmental justice issues in Multnomah County. Areas of the County with the highest concentrations of diesel exhaust have estimated cancer risks of 542-in-1,000,000, more than 500 times higher than the additional cancer risk associated with the state's benchmarks. Diesel is also an extremely potent short term climate forcer. Multnomah County's own data indicates that African Americans are three times more likely to be exposed to diesel particulate matter, and Latinos are 2.5 times more likely, than white county residents.

The Clean Air Construction Procurement Standard is a great example of local leadership on this issue, and is a building block for more regional reduction of diesel emissions. In addition to construction, railyards and distribution centers are significant sources, particularly in low income neighborhoods. While efforts to form a local air quality district have thus far been unsuccessful, the County could still collaborate on regulating indirect sources of diesel pollution such as construction sites, railyards and distribution centers. We urge the County to continue to think creatively about how we can continue to reduce diesel emissions and protect the health and safety of all its residents, especially those who are disproportionately affected by many overlapping layers of air pollution.

## **FOOD AND WATER RECOMMENDATIONS**

As a newly formed subcommittee, it is recognized that all living things need food and water. There can be no sustainability or innovation without a strong local food system that is inclusive to all, and clean water. As choices are made to uplift our food system and improve water health we will be improving the health of our entire community. This way of thinking is not new by any means, but it can be viewed as a fresh look at how to integrate old ways into having a truly Sustainable and Innovative future.

### **Decolonization of waterways and food sources**

Rename the Sauvie Island Bridge: Sauvie Island and the bridge connecting the island to the mainland are named after Laurent Sauvé, a French Canadian fur trapper in the employ of the Hudson Bay Company who colonized the island for profit. The island, known as Wapato Island, is important as a usual and accustomed place for Native American Communities from time immemorial. The County's bridge should celebrate their living history, and not the history of colonizers who took over the island only after decimating the Native inhabitants.

### **Food**

Some of the biggest topics that have come to the front of the food discussions are:

1. Loss of agricultural land within the county over time has led to less local food being grown, less opportunity to work in the fields to earn income, and more acreage converted into building and parking lots. Land held by various government agencies could be used to grow food and create access to those wanting to do the work. We recommend protecting as well as creating farm land, with access especially to marginalized communities.
2. Food security. Everyone should have access to good healthy food, including more emphasis on fresh and local in programs such WIC and SNAP. There is a lot of food going to waste in farm fields, grocery stores, and restaurants that could perhaps be utilized by those going without.

### **Water**

Some topics around the issue of water are:

1. Use of pesticides. The use of pesticides on a commercial scale and even more importantly from residential use needs to be regulated. This is one of the biggest contributors of pollution in the water that needs to be mitigated.



2. Insufficient stormwater treatment. As the rain leaves the buildings and roads carrying pollutants, the only barrier and treatment it gets before it goes back into the streams and rivers are treatment facilities, and far too many drains offer no treatment.
3. Prioritize Fish Passage: The County's roads severely impact the ability of fish, especially anadromous fish species like salmon, from accessing spawning grounds. These fish blockages impact access to first food and further threaten endangered fish populations. The County must prioritize culvert replacement in areas like Beaver Creek, where culvert failure threatens fish populations.

We appreciate the opportunity to share our ideas for how the County can deepen your commitments to sustainability in service to those community members, and to explore innovative opportunities to use the authority and resources the County has to address the critical needs and looming crises that we face.

Sincerely,

Members of the ACSI Committee