



## **BRIGHT LINES**

Sunday, April 21<sup>st</sup> 2019

Mayor Ted Wheeler

Commissioner Nick Fish

Commissioner Chloe Eudaly

Commissioner Amanda Fritz

Commissioner Jo Ann Hardesty

On Sunday April 21st, Extinction Rebellion initiated a blockade of the Zenith crude oil transloading facility at 5501 NW Front Ave. and its associated rail lines. We are writing to inform you that we have rezoned the industrial corridor in which this facility is sited, which also houses numerous other fossil fuel operations, from an Employment and Industry base zone to an Open Space designation. We urge you to use your powers to make this zoning change official, but we are not waiting for such measures to begin enforcing our own code.

We do not have the mandate of having been elected, nor do we have a budget or a clear, formal mechanism for enforcing these changes. We do, however, have the mandate of enforcing a policy that is congruent with a dangerous physical reality, which you have not thus far evinced. At this point, in the context of a rapid deterioration of the physical predicates of life on earth, we no longer believe anyone who fails to take hasty measures to impact this trajectory has a meaningful claim to power.

This is all the more pertinent with respect to the City of Portland because its government, unlike those of more right-wing polities, is entirely aware we are in a crisis without precedent, and entirely lacks policies with any plausible semblance of a chance of responding to that crisis. Portland has a Climate Action Plan, which acknowledges

the gravity of the situation, but which describes policy actions with no coherent relationship with the plan's emissions reduction targets—ostensible emissions reductions from individual measures are not even quantified, and in a number of cases are, cumulatively, manifestly insufficient.

For the sake of illustration, the plan's targets require significant reductions in transportation emissions, but of the 2015 CAP's 63 unique transportation policy items:

- 11 consist solely of expressing “support” for another plan or policy (e.g. “support implementation of a federal fuel standard”)<sup>1</sup>
- 21 consist solely of other plans' putative measures, or planning processes and policies which do not currently exist (e.g. “include carbon targets in update to Portland Transportation System Plan”)<sup>2</sup>
- 11 are merely efforts to increase modeling accuracy or information availability for some aspect of the economy (e.g. “make data available to improve real-time information about transportation options”)<sup>3</sup>
- 11 are sufficiently intangible to describe a tremendous range of actions, or very conceivably none at all (e.g. “recognize the role of goods delivery in supporting healthy, vibrant industrial districts”)<sup>4</sup>

This leaves only nine measures that could qualify as concrete actions, all of which are on the scale of changes from existing traffic signals to “smart” signals and, even lacking an attempt at quantification, are clearly insufficient to substantially impact transportation emissions. This analysis is also supported by the raw empirical reality, which any long-term resident of Portland would acknowledge, that there are *more* automobiles on Portland streets and interstates than at the time of the issuance of the first CAP, in 2013.

Confronted with such a circumstance, only two conclusions are reasonable: one, the City of Portland's government does not understand its own policies, or two, the City of Portland's government has actively issued, or consciously failed to update, policies it knows are wildly insufficient. We believe the latter is more likely, and that the cause of

this is not because it was your intention at the outset. We believe, no matter what scale of power one possesses, that meaningfully confronting the climate crisis involves great uncertainty, inconvenience, and conflict with very powerful and unscrupulous adversaries.

For all the overstated technicality of climate policy at large, there are exceptionally simple measures the city could take which, in contrast to the mountains of acronym-laden planning documents the state and city have issued to date, would substantially and immediately impact our contribution to the climate crisis. The zoning code changes we have announced today are an example of the city's ability to influence the carbon economy beyond its borders and the power politics that underly this economy; zoning automobiles out of the downtown core, as a number of European cities have done or are in the process of doing, is an example of a policy that would actually impact the city's transportation emissions.

Of course, such zoning code changes would both generate public controversy and, in a number of cases, be very likely to create conflicts with other political jurisdictions (i.e. state and federal preemption conflicts). Meaningful action on climate is inevitably difficult and frightening. The ability to confront difficulty and fear and take action nonetheless—in this case, to contest the power that underlies the ecological crisis, with no guarantees whatsoever that one's actions will have any measurable impact—is precisely the quality we believe defines *leadership*. We are asking you to be leaders. We are asking you to find your courage.

We are asking you to find your courage. We do not ask this in ignorance of the considerable burdens it implies, but we ask you to consider them against the unbearable sacrifices that have been made by those struggling, locally and globally, against the destruction of life on earth, and the unthinkable consequences the world will face if you do not. People right here in Portland have turned off pipelines, blockaded trains, faced off with riot police, been charged with felonies, been subjects of investigations, sacrificed careers, and otherwise endured considerable discomfort in their efforts. To be blunt: we ask you to look directly into the ugly face of the greatest existential and spiritual crisis that humanity, or any sentient creature on earth, has ever

faced, and act accordingly. The world is rapidly changing, and we will all feel the weight of our actions. You have a form of power we do not possess, but we are not asking anything of you that many of us have not given many times over.

We urge you to join us. We urge you to join us, in particular, in rezoning the northwest industrial corridor which contains the Zenith energy facility. We also urge you to accept that no one with more power than you, or less to lose, is going to intervene in this global trajectory.

Sincerely,

Ken Ward, *Climate Direct Action, The Brightlines Initiative, Extinction Rebellion PDX*

Arnold Schroder, *I-5 Earth First!, The Brightlines Initiative, Extinction Rebellion PDX*

Leah Francis, *Extinction Rebellion US National Team, Extinction Rebellion PDX, Climate Direct Action*

1. CAP measures 4A, 4B, 4E(6), 4F, 4Q(c), 4Z, 4GG, 6A, 7G, 7D, 7E
2. CAP measures 4E(a),(b), 4G(a),(b), 4K, 4L, 4M, 4N, 4O, 4X, 4BB(a), 4CC, 4DD(b), 4EE, 5C, 7A, 7F, 4V, 4X, 4AA, 5B(c)
3. CAP measures 4Q(a),(b), 4Y, 5B(a),(b), 6B, 4H, 4I, 4S, 4BB(d), 4DD(a), 6C
4. CAP measures 4BB(c),(b), 7B, 4P, 4D, 4F, 4R, 4EE, 5A, 5B(a),(e)