



CITY OF OAKLAND
CITY COUNCIL

LEGISLATIVE ANALYST MEMORANDUM

To: Public Works Committee
From: Alice Glasner, Legislative Analyst
Date: February 26, 2008
Re: **Report and Recommendations of the Oil Independent Oakland by 2020 Task Force**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On February 26, 2008, the Oil Independent Oakland by 2020 Task Force (OIO), a ten-member committee appointed by City Council and the Mayor, presents its report and recommendations for reducing oil consumption in Oakland.

Three of the key initiatives of the **Oil Independent Action Plan** are:

- Adopt the Oil Depletion Protocol as City policy so that Oakland will protect itself against diminishing oil supplies and/or future hikes in petroleum prices.
- Redesign the City into numerous “urban villages” where jobs, services and shopping are conveniently located so that walking, biking, and electric vehicle use can become more practical and desirable on a daily basis.
- Encourage more use of public transit so that when people do need to travel beyond their immediate neighborhoods, alternatives to private automobiles are available, accessible and convenient.

The Oil Independent Action Plan describes numerous detailed recommendations supporting these focal points, as well as other recommendations related to the larger picture of changing Oakland’s energy consumption patterns, creating green jobs, and reaching out to Oakland citizens to also reduce household oil consumption. To conform to the OIO’s vision, some of the actions require immediate implementation, while others requiring more resources or collaboration, may demand a series of steps over time.

The Oil Independent Action Plan is available on the OIO’s web page on the City of Oakland’s website, at: <http://www.oaklandnet.com/Oil/default.html>.

BACKGROUND

Oakland City Council Resolution No. 80214, adopted in October 2006, called for the formation of the Oil Independent Oakland by 2020 Task Force (OIO), to explore strategies that not only reduce oil consumption in Oakland but enhance the local economy and economic opportunities for Oakland residents.

The OIO convened thirteen public meetings from April through December 2007, with members providing expertise in transportation and energy, air quality, land use and other public policy issues, as well as environmental and economic justice. Presentations to the OIO included: reviews of similar commission work in Sweden and Portland, OR.; an assessment of greenhouse gas emissions in Oakland; the challenge of 'Peak Oil'; the 'Personal Rapid Transit' model; the urban village model for Oakland; public transit in Oakland, the region, and Curitiba, Brazil; 'Green Jobs and Eco-Equity'; and 'Navigating Out of Fuel Dependence'. There were also ad hoc work sessions on subjects related to the Port of Oakland, transportation, and land use and infrastructure.

The OIO Task Force sought to develop an action plan that would address the inevitable future oil supply shortages and/ or substantial price increases which could have a significant and adverse effect on Oakland's economy and population. The Task Force agreed that by lowering Oakland's dependence on oil, it could create a more resilient city that could better deal with these future challenges. The Task Force tried to focus on recommendations that would be "city actionable"—that is, where the City could take concrete steps to reduce its oil consumption, and also on recommendations that consider social and environmental justice.

To achieve the goals of significant reduction in citywide oil consumption, the Task Force discussed a number of options and reached consensus on several principle areas:

- The physical arrangement of the city and its infrastructure,
- Transportation,
- Port operations, and
- Preparing for oil shortfalls and resulting price increases.

The Task Force identified actions that could be implemented by the City, opportunities for outreach to citizens and collaboration with other jurisdictions, including the Port of Oakland and regional transportation agencies.

FISCAL/POLICY DISCUSSION

The OIO Task Force Action Plan recommends policy changes to the 1998 Land Use and Transportation Element (LUTE) of the General Plan. Some of these, such as increasing density and mixed uses, promoting efficient transportation as well as improving access for bicycles and pedestrians are already supported to varying degrees. The OIO Action Plan advocates a more expansive, yet systematic, integration of these and other objectives to create a greater number of community-oriented 'vitality centers'. These recommendations would require amendments to the General Plan as well as substantive revisions to the Zoning Ordinance so that elements like density, the range of allowed uses, parking requirements, and 'transfer of development rights' are updated to reflect the new General Plan policies.

Several other recommendations call for innovative policies in areas such as creating permanent green jobs, carbon charges, creating contingency plans to prepare for constraints in oil supplies, and producing localization strategies—developing plans to increase local markets for local goods and services.

It would be speculative at this point to assess the costs of these recommendations. Certainly implementing a new General Plan strategy would require initial costs in staff time and could have costs related to infrastructure changes. The Task Force recommends that the City seek both public and private funding sources for infrastructure costs. Additionally, there are costs or tradeoffs associated with a public education campaign to further the Action Plan goals and designating City staff for a new ‘Oil and Energy Team’, which could either include hiring new people or adding new assignments to existing staff.

Nonetheless, there is also a high potential for savings and even revenues over the long term, in both the public and private sectors. For example, by reducing single-driver automobile trips, reducing total oil and energy consumption across the board, and preparing for imminent oil price increases, Oakland and Oaklanders could save in fuel costs. There are also potential revenue sources from new businesses in rezoned areas, from new uses on former parking lots, and from new residents who come to Oakland as it becomes more attractive because of its ‘urban village’ feel.

SUSTAINABLE OPPORTUNITIES

Oakland could be the first city in the United States to adopt the Oil Depletion Protocol with reduction targets. Reducing oil consumption, as presented in the OIO Action Plan, by modifying land use patterns, facilitating alternative transportation, and/ or adding carbon charges could also effectively reduce traffic and localized air pollutants. The combination of reduced vehicle exhaust and increased opportunities for walking and bicycling could have positive health effects on the local population. Since 47% of Oakland’s greenhouse gas emissions are attributed to transportation (according to ICLEI, presented on page 8 of report), adoption of the OIO Action Plan is a step that could reduce Oakland’s contribution to climate change.

The OIO Action Plan recommends several initiatives which would reduce oil consumption as it diversifies and supports the local economy. These include creating green jobs, allowing the ‘collocation’ of diverse yet compatible uses, supporting High Speed Rail as an alternative to short-haul air travel, and developing the infrastructure to support alternative transportation, supporting clean energy generation and contingency plans for the City and the Port. These measures could offer Oaklanders some economic and environmental resilience as the price of oil increases.

CONCLUSIONS

The Oil Independent Oakland by 2020 Task Force has presented a wide array of recommendations for reducing oil consumption in the City of Oakland. The Oakland City Council has an opportunity to accept or reject the recommendations, in whole or in part.

Recommendations could be carried forward through policy or ordinance development. As part of this work, fiscal implications should be developed, as well as timelines for the most effective Oil Independence.