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## QuickPoint! – Portland Chases Another Dream

By John A. Charles, Jr.

[The U.S. Department of Transportation announced this week](#) that Portland is one of seven cities still in the running for a \$50 million grant as part of DOT's "Smart Cities" challenge. Portland is proposing to build "smarter streets" that talk to self-driving cars and to develop an app that will decrease reliance on private automobiles.

This is not a joke, and it's not another episode of *Portlandia*. There are actually federal bureaucrats who think that putting sensors in streets to talk with computerized cars is important, and that Portland is capable of running such a system.

Apparently, they are unaware that Portland's street system is so run down that the city could be the film location for a *Mad Max* movie.

And given the region's obsession with 19<sup>th</sup> century street cars that move more slowly than pedestrians, why would anyone think Portland is capable of being a national leader in 21<sup>st</sup> century roads?

This is a city that tried to prevent car-sharing companies such as Uber and Lyft from legally operating here last year. No fancy street sensors were required; the necessary smart phones were already in the hands of potential customers. All the City Council needed to do was get out of the way, and even that was too complicated for them.

We should let Google worry about autonomous cars. Portland should stick to something simple, like filling potholes.

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*John A. Charles, Jr. is President and CEO of Cascade Policy Institute, Oregon's free market public policy research organization.*